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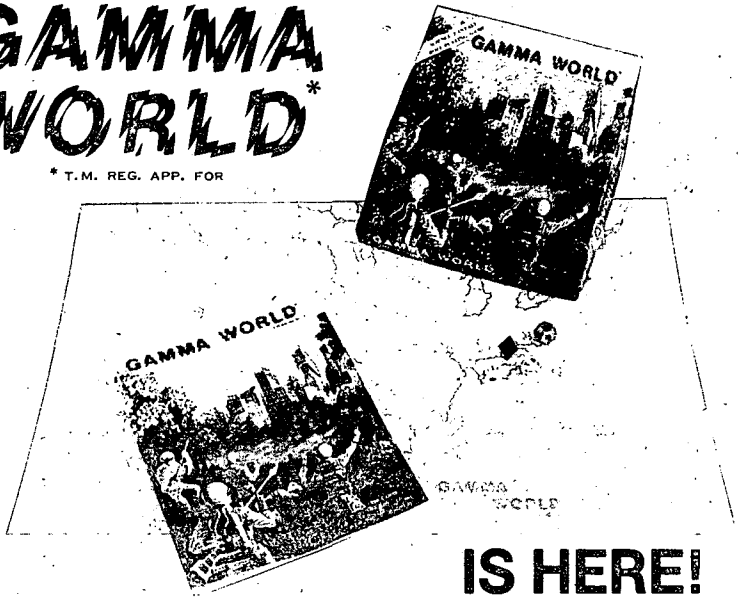

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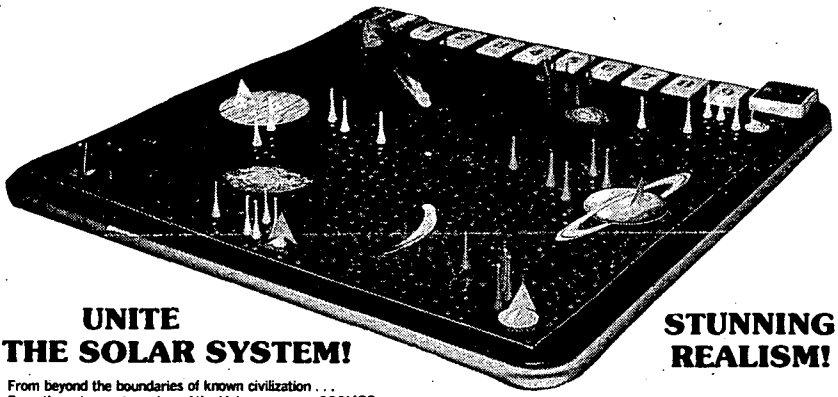

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EDITORIAL: HINTS

by Isaac Asimov

art: Frank Kelly Freas

Every once in a short while I get a letter from some eager young would-be writer asking me for some "hints" on the art of writing science fiction.

The feeling I have is that my correspondents think there is some magic formula jealously guarded by the professionals, but that since I'm such a nice guy I will spill the beans if properly approached.

Alas, there's no such thing, no magic formula, no secret tricks, no hidden short-cuts.

I'm sorry to have to tell you that it's a matter of hard work over a long period of time. If you know of any exceptions to this, that's exactly what they are—exceptions.

There are, however, some general principles that could be useful, to my way of thinking, and here they are.

1) *You have to prepare for a career as a successful science fiction writer—as you would for any other highly specialized calling.*

First, you have to learn to use your tools, just as a surgeon has to learn to use his.

The basic tool for any writer is the English language, which means you must develop a good vocabulary and brush up on such prosaic things as spelling and grammar.

There can be little argument about vocabulary, but it may occur to you that spelling and grammar are just frills. After all, if you write great and gorgeous stories, surely the editor will be delighted to correct your spelling and grammar.

Not so! He (or she) won't be.

Besides, take it from an old war-horse, if your spelling and grammar are rotten, you won't be writing a great and gorgeous story. Someone who can't use a saw and hammer doesn't turn out stately furniture.

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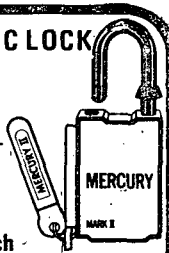

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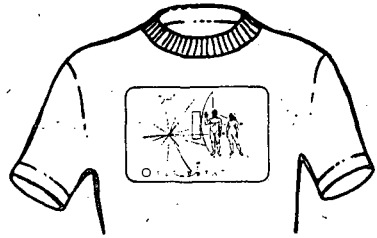

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Even if you've been diligent at school, have developed a vocabulary, can spell "sacrilege" and "supersede" and never say "between you and I" or "I ain't never done nothing," that's still not enough. There's the subtle structure of the English sentence and the artful construction of the English paragraph. There is the clever interweaving of plot, the handling of dialog, and a thousand other intricacies.

How do you learn that? Do you read books on how to write, or attend classes on writing, or go to writing conferences? These are all of inspirational value, I'm sure, but they won't teach you what you really want to know.

What *will* teach you is the careful reading of the masters of English prose. This does not mean condemning yourself to years of falling asleep over dull classics. Good writers are invariably fascinating writers—the two go together. In my opinion, the English writers who most clearly use the correct word every time and who most artfully and deftly put together their sentences and paragraphs are Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, and P.G. Wodehouse.

Read them, and others, but with attention. They represent your schoolroom. Observe what they do and try to figure out why they do it. It's no use other people explaining it to you; until you see it for yourself and it becomes part of you, nothing will help.

But suppose that no matter how you try, you can't seem to absorb the lesson. —Well, it may be that you're not a writer. It's no disgrace. You can always go on to take up some slightly inferior profession like surgery or the Presidency of the United States. It won't be as good, of course; but we can't all scale the heights.

Second, for a science fiction writing career, it is not enough to know the English language; you also have to know science. You may not want to use much science in your stories; but you'll have to know it anyway, so that what you do use, you don't mis-use.

This does not mean you have to be a professional scientist, or a science major at college. You don't even have to go to college. It does mean, though, that you have to be willing to study science on your own, if your formal education has been weak in that direction.

It's not impossible. One of the best writers of hard science fiction is Fred Pohl, and he never even finished high school. Of course, there are very few people who are as bright as Fred, but you can write considerably less well than he does and still be pretty good.

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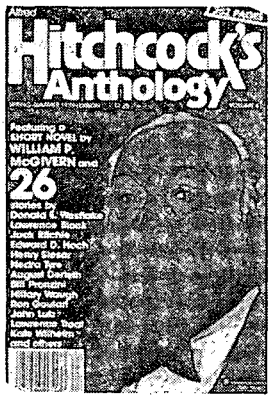

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Fortunately, there is more good, popular-science writing these days than there was in previous generations, and you can learn a great deal, rather painlessly, if you read such science fiction writers as L. Sprague de Camp, Ben Bova, and Poul Anderson in their non-fictional moods—or even Isaac Asimov.

What's more, professional scientists are also writing effectively for the public these days, as witness Carl Sagan's magnificent books. And there's always *Scientific American*.

Third, even if you know your science and your writing, it is still not likely that you will be able to put them together from scratch. You will have to be a diligent reader of science fiction itself to learn the conventions and the tricks of the trade—how to interweave background and plot, for instance.

2) *You have to work at the job.*

The final bit of schooling is writing itself. Nor must you wait till your preparation is complete. The act of writing is itself part of the preparation.

You can't completely understand what good writers do until you try it yourself. You learn a great deal when you find your story breaking apart in your hands—or beginning to hang together. Write from the very beginning, then, and keep on writing.

3) *You have to be patient.*

Since writing is itself a schooling, you can't very well expect to sell the first story you write, (Yes, I know Bob Heinlein did it, but he was Bob Heinlein. You are only you.)

But then, why should that discourage you? After you finished the first grade at school, you weren't through, were you? You went on to the second grade, then the third, then the fourth, and so on.

If each story you write is one more step in your literary education, a rejection shouldn't matter. [Editors don't reject writers; they reject pieces of paper that have been typed on. Ed.] The next story will be better, and the next one after that still better, and eventually—

But then why bother to submit the stories? If you don't, how can you possibly know when you graduate? After all, you don't know which story you'll sell.

You might even sell the first. You almost certainly won't, but you just might.

Of course, even after you sell a story, you may fail to place the

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next dozen, but having done it once, it is quite likely that you will eventually do it again, if you persevere.

But what if you write and write and write and you don't seem to be getting any better and all you collect are printed rejection slips? Once again, it may be that you are not a writer and will have to settle for a lesser post such as that of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

4) *You have to be reasonable.*

Writing is the most wonderful and satisfying task in the world, but it does have one or two insignificant flaws. Among those flaws is the fact that a writer can almost never make a living at it.

Oh, a few writers make a lot of money—they're the ones we all hear about. But for every writer who rakes it in, there are a thousand who dread the monthly rent-bill. It shouldn't be like that, but it is.

Take my case. Three years after I sold my first story, I reached the stage of selling everything I wrote, so that I had become a successful writer. Nevertheless, it took me seventeen more years as a *successful* writer before I could actually support myself in comfort on my earnings as a writer.

So while you're trying to be a writer, make sure you find another way of making a decent living—and don't quit your job after you make your first sale.

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ON BOOKS
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The Magic Goes Away by Larry Niven, illustrations by Esteban Maroto: Ace, 1978, 218pp., $4.95 (paper).

Home From The Shore by Gordon R. Dickson, illustrations by James R. Odbert: Sunridge, 1978, 221pp., $4.95 (paper).

Pro by Gordon R. Dickson, illustrations by James R. Odbert: Ace, 1978, 185pp., $1.95 (paper).

Science Fiction Handbook by George S. Elrick: Chicago Review Press, 1978, 315pp., $15.00 (cloth), $8.95 (paper).

The American Shore by Samuel R. Delany: Dragon Press, 1978, 243pp., $12.50 (cloth).

Fantasms: A Jack Vance Bibliography by Daniel J. Levack and Tim Underwood: Underwood/Miller, 1978, 91pp., $10.95 (cloth), $6.95 (paper).

King—Of The Khyber Rifles by Talbot Mundy, illustrations by Joseph Clement Coll: Donald M. Grant, 1978, 394pp., $15.00 (cloth).

The Magic Pen Of Joseph Clement Coll by Walt Reed: Donald M. Grant, 1978, 176pp., $20.00 (cloth).

The Art Of The Fantastic edited by Gerry de la Ree: de la Ree, 1978, 128pp., $15.50 (cloth).

Age Of Dreams by Alicia Austin: Donald M. Grant, 1978, 144pp., $25.00 (cloth).

Faeries by Brian Froud and Alan Lee, edited by David Larkin: Abrams, 1978, unpaged, $17.50 (cloth).

Science fiction readers will argue about anything at the drop of the proverbial hat. One of the favorite unresolved arguments has been on the perfect length for a science fiction story. The short-story adherents claim that most ideas can be handled in just a few thousand words while the novel adherents feel that the complexity of the true novel is much more satisfying even though the fusion of strong plot, interesting ideas, and good characterization is very difficult to achieve. During the heyday of the pulps, there was a middle ground. The lead story in most pulp magazines was a novella—a story between 25,000 and 40,000 words. There was enough room for some character development, but the length was still short enough to handle a strong plot without losing some of

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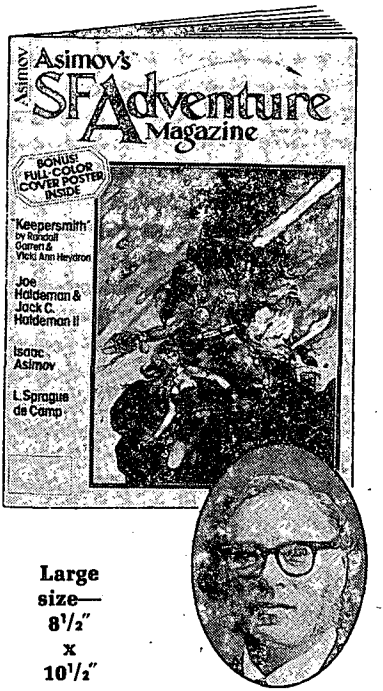

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the pacing. The economics of book publishing have downgraded the novella in recent decades because it was too long for a digest magazine but too short for a book. Thanks to some changes in publishing attitudes, the novella seems to be making a comeback.

Illustrations and graphics have slowly become a major part of science fiction publishing. The combination of a short novel with illustrations to flesh it out to book size seems so logical, it's a wonder it wasn't done twenty years ago. Ace Books has three such volumes out at the moment. *The Magic Goes Away* by Larry Niven and *Home From The Shore* by Gordon R. Dickson are oversize "trade" paperbacks, while *Pro* by Gordon R. Dickson is standard rack size. The Niven book, a 1976 novella from *Odyssey* magazine (despite the "first publication anywhere!" emblazoned on the cover) is the most successful in story as well as illustration. It's a straight fantasy with magic treated as logically as possible. The illustrations by Esteban Maroto are mostly good and integrate well with the story. *Home From The Shore,* a prequel to Dickson's novel *The Space Swimmers,* has illustrations by James Odbert which are interesting, but very stiff. The story itself, a clash between two cultures, is high-quality Dickson. It's a solid adventure story which shows the advantages of the novella length rather well. *Pro,* on the other hand, seems padded even at short novel length; and the illustrations are bad.

The major problem with illustrated short novels is the price. *The Magic Goes Away* and *Home From The Shore* took about an hour each to read—and they sell for five bucks! I looked at the drawings before reading the book and glanced at them again afterward, but didn't even notice them when doing the actual reading.

Science Fiction Handbook by George S. Elrick is the worst reference book I've ever seen. It defines 1046 terms from fiction and science, most of which are self-explanatory and some just wrong. Mr. Elrick is described as a member of the Science Fiction Research Association, the world's foremost authority on Buck Rogers, and the author of 38 books. He doesn't seem to have read any science fiction later than 1927—and seems to have misunderstood even those. Avoid this book and don't in any way confuse it with the excellent *Science Fiction Handbook, Revised* by L. Sprague de Camp and Catherine Crook de Camp.

The American Shore by Samuel R. Delany is a book-length study of "Angouleme" by Thomas M. Disch, a short story first published in 1972. The analysis and criticism is, of course,

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exhaustive and subtle—in many places, much too subtle for me. In his introduction, Delany warns that readers looking for an introduction to the serious reading of science fiction, or an introduction to the works of Thomas M. Disch, or who need reassurance (?) rather than instruction, or do not have a minimal familiarity with structuralist criticism, should look elsewhere. If you're still interested, the book, which is a limited edition, can be ordered from Dragon Press, Elizabethtown NY 12932.

Fantasms: A Jack Vance Bibliography by David J. H. Levack and Tim Underwood is outstanding in both scholarship and production. It lists all of Vance's professional fiction, has a chronological as well as an alphabetical list, is profusely illustrated with reproductions of magazine covers and book jackets, and—unlike most bibliographies—is easy to read and use. It also lists many Vance novels and series originally published under pseudonyms. The paperback edition is limited to 900 copies and the hardcover to 100 copies. If you're a Vance fan, send your money to Chuck Miller, 239 North 4th St., Columbia PA 17512 as quickly as possible. It won't stay in print for very long.

Marty Massoglia (3100 Bellevue Ave #311, Los Angeles CA 90026) has been making the life of science fiction collectors much easier by producing a series of computer printouts listing the entire science fiction output of various paperback publishers. Send him a stamped self-addressed envelope for a price list of what is currently available.

More than a quarter of a century ago, in a tiny New York Fourth Avenue bookstore, I discovered a book which was to strongly affect my life. It was *King—Of The Khyber Rifles* by Talbot Mundy. I had been reading Burroughs for several years; but, even then, I realized that Burroughs, although strong on adventure, was lacking in characterization and writing quality. Mundy was the first fantasy adventure author I discovered with some depth to his writing. I've reread this book maybe twenty times since; and even though I've subsequently found finer writers and better books about India, my love affair with Mundy remains undimmed. The book also turned me into a collector of Mundy because I felt the need to read everything the man ever wrote. What's even worse, it made me a first edition collector because only the first editions were illustrated by Joseph Clement Coll, one of the finest pen and ink artists of all time. That original edition had only half a dozen double-page spreads by Coll, but they were so perfect for the book that the names of Coll and Mundy

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Of the first edition of **SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK,** *reviewers said:*

"Let me say at once that de Camp's *Science Fiction Handbook,* to which I am thus calling attention, is an immensely diverting volume; it is one of the most entertaining textbooks I have read in years.... For embryo professionals the work is, I should guess, the Last Word in genial instructions and candid cautions."

... Vincent Starrett, writing for the Chicago *Tribune,* 30 August 1953.

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... Anthony Boucher, writing as H. H. Holmes for the New York *Herald-Tribune,* 6 September 1953.

"The aspiring writer is given straightforward and adequate information about markets and editors, readers and fans, science-fiction writers and their preparation for the work, sources of ideas, plotting, writing, and selling a story, a writer's extracurricular duties, such as lecturing, giving advice and dodging fans, and even on how to be an author's wife."

... *Book List,* 15 September 1953.

Of this edition, **SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK, REVISED,** *science-fiction writers say:*

"*Science Fiction Handbook, Revised* has all the value of the original handbook, but has also added many new features. A section on "The Business Side of Writing" should be *must* reading for anyone interested in any aspect of writing—science fiction or otherwise. I'd have been a richer man today if I'd had it when I began writing; and now that I've read it, I expect to profit from it for many years to come."

... Lester del Rey, 29 July 1975.

"This may well be the best how-to book ever published for writers of any kind. It is certainly far and away the best for writers of science fiction and fantasy. Newcomers will find it indispensable, old hands hardly less valuable, while to the general reader it will give a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the profession."

... Poul Anderson, 1 August 1975.

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became forever linked for me. When, years later, I found out Coll had done nearly one hundred illustrations for the original magazine version in *Everybody's*, I tried to get them all. I'm still trying; but thanks to a new edition of *King* and an art book on Joseph Clement Coll, I'm at least partially satisfied.

The new Grant edition of *King—Of The Khyber Rifles* reprints all the magazine illustrations including various marginal sketches. The reproduction, alas, is not as clear as the fine line originals, but should give you a good idea of why Coll and Mundy worked so well together. (Coll illustrated many of Mundy's works up to his untimely death in 1921 at the age of 41.) If you really want to see how good Coll was, try *The Magic Pen Of Joseph Clement Coll* by Walt Reed. There are 250 drawings on slick paper, illustrating such authors as Mundy, Rohmer, Doyle, Wallace, etc. The edition is limited to 750 copies and is only available for $20.00 from Donald M. Grant, Publisher, West Kingston RI 02892.

The two strongest points in Coll's work were his fine line rendering and his ability to show bodies in tension. Virgil Finlay (1914-1971) adapted the fine line technique and became the most popular fantasy artist of the 1940s and 1950s. Finlay was an appealing but limited artist. The overly rendered technique he used hid a woodenness in his figure drawings. There are many examples of Finlay's work in *The Art Of The Fantastic,* a sampler of fantastic art reproduced from originals in the collection of Gerry de la Ree. Finlay stands out when compared to his contemporaries (one of my favorites appears on page 21), but the prize of the book is a series of drawings by J.R. Weguelin done in 1893 for *Montezuma's Daughter* by Rider Haggard. This book is available from Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood Lane, Saddle River NJ 07458.

Alicia Austin, who first appeared on the fantasy art scene in the late 1960s, is one of the best artists working today. *Age Of Dreams,* her first collection, is outstanding. It has several hundred drawings in both color and black-&-white showing the full range of Ms. Austin's talents. There are delicate watercolors, vivid pastels, intricate line work, and bold designs. All are beautiful. Can you ask for more? Besides the regular 2,000 copy edition, there is a signed, numbered edition of 200 copies with slip case and signed print available from the publisher at $40.00 (Donald M. Grant, West Kingston RI 02892).

Faeries by Brain Froud and Alan Lee is very much a book of the 1970s although its roots in both art and publishing are deep.

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The lush fantasy illustrations hark back to an earlier age of art books—the work of Rackham, Robinson, Dulac, and Neilsen. Froud and Lee are fine artists; and their illustrations, integrated with the text, make a book which will be read and looked at for decades. You can't go wrong buying it.

Actually, the most important thing about *Faeries* is not how good it is, but that it exists at all—and at an affordable price. Ian and Betty Ballantine are responsible for *Faeries,* as they are for most of the modern publishing industry, although the only place either name appears on the book is at the end of a short introduction by Betty Ballantine. The earlier age of book illustration died out because of high printing expenses and limited appeal. Ian Ballantine, while head of Ballantine Books, was the first publisher to make mass-market illustrated books available at a reasonable price. This has been the cornerstone of Peacock Press, which the Ballantines founded in 1974 after their departure from Ballantine Books. Along the way, they discovered the artists responsible for *Faeries*. *Gnomes,* the phenomenal best seller of the last year was actually a joint venture between Abrams and Peacock Press because Ian Ballantine guaranteed the huge press run. *Gnomes* eventually sold 600,000 copies in hardcover, and the Ballantines had *Faeries* ready to follow it up.

Next year, there will be *Giants.*

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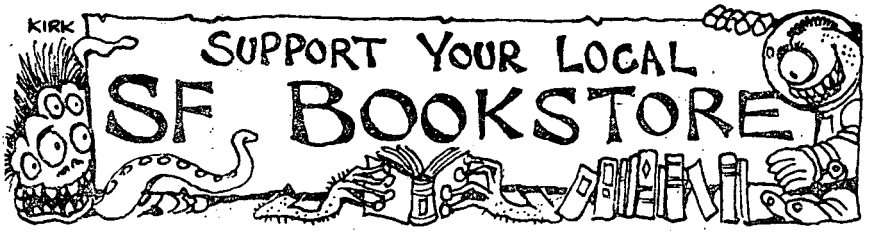

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A TIME FOR TERROR

by Frederick Longbeard

art: Alex Schomburg

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Mr. Longbeard was born in Harrisburg PA, six days after Corregidor fell to the Japanese Imperial Army, and grew up in a succession of military schools and the U.S. Army, where he tested and repaired HAWK missiles. He has been a production manager for a microfilm company, published some philosophy under another name, and lost a race for the Maine State Legislature to a used-car salesman.

I.

The others were dead. As I lay there, my hands bound behind me, searching the darkness for a speck of light, it kept running through my mind: They're dead; they're dead, all dead. . . . The Terranists had hit us as though they were storm-driven. One second the new commandant of security was putting the number-two Terranist on display for the press—then, chaos. The commandant and guards fell a split moment after the doors blew off their hinges; I saw that hack reporter Dubord get it an instant later. All dead.

The dryness of the dark place could be felt, and I turned my face from the dusty floor, coughing. With effort, I worked up enough spit to wet my tongue, then my cracked lips. Lowering the back of my head to the floor, I held my breath and listened for the mass drivers. They said you could hear them anywhere on the Lunar surface if you were against bedrock. So, either I wasn't on the Lunar surface, against bedrock, or they were full of it. Voices, dim and distant.

Doubling up, I pushed against the dusty floor with my shoulder and right knee and teetered into a sitting position. The gravity said Luna. More voices, soft footsteps against dusty rock, a hand on a door latch. In the dark, flashes of the Terranist commandos exploded before my eyes. Men, women, police or civilian—no difference—all dead. Loud, muffled orders from behind a door. The lump in my throat, my fear, grew to where it became difficult to breathe. A light metal door slammed open against a wall. Outlined by the dim light from outside was a hand against the door and the muzzle of a weapon. As dim as it was, the light made me close my eyes. When I opened them, the outline of someone in

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surface gear filled the doorway. Behind the figure, others were moving back and forth, shouting and carrying things.

"On your feet, munie." The figure waved the gun at me. "Let's go; move it! You're not dead. Yet."

I looked behind me and saw a rough-cut wall. Pushing my legs, I backed up against it and used my hands and shoulders to inch up the wall. Still leaning against the wall, I turned toward the armed figure. "Where am I?"

"Come out of there."

"Can I at least have some water?"

The figure stood motionless for a second. "Laddie, your only chance of lasting out the next thirty seconds is to do exactly as I say." The figure backed out of the doorway and waved the muzzle of his gun. "Let's go."

I pushed off from the wall, made it to the door and stepped out into the corridor. As I worked my jaw around, I could feel the blood caked on the right side of my face. Nameless with the gun gave me a dig in the kidney and I turned right. I'm usually ready to give a man with a gun any kind of slack he asks for. But that only applies when the gunsel trades me my life for following his orders. When it's a plus or minus thirty seconds in exchange for bruised organs, the hell with it. I whirled around to plant a knee amongst his family jewels, but instead, met a rifle stock upside the right side of my head. Unfortunately, I didn't black out. When the chimes in my head quieted down, I spit out the dust from the corridor floor, along with a few teeth, and looked back at my keeper. He wore the traditional greyish surface suit, helmet cracked back, except his suit looked in bad repair and had a broad red stripe painted around the chest. He waved his gun up and down.

"Get up, stupid, and head down the walk. Another performance like that will earn you a bolt through your kneecap."

On my knees, I looked up at him. "You're not going to kill me, are you?"

His face was round, dark, and cruel. He smiled, and a laugh started somewhere around his feet and rumbled out of his mouth. "Laddie, that depends on how much trouble you are alive."

Another red-banded figure pulled up to us carrying a crate and nodded toward my keeper. "Need a hand, Ahmis?"

He shook his head. "No." He cocked his head toward me. "On your feet; harmless." Again, he waved his gun up and down. I put one leg forward and stood, spitting blood on the floor. I looked at

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the four gleaming white teeth among the blood and dust of the corridor floor, remembering out of a childhood long forgotten that the most terrible thing in the world was getting a tooth knocked out. I looked at the face of my keeper. There was no remorse, nor even a hint of pity. "Turn around and stop at the next door to your left."

I turned, my cheek and jaw throbbing with indescribable aches. Three more red-banded figures, two women and a man, raced past headed in the opposite direction. One slow foot at a time, I walked the remaining few meters to the door. As I reached it, I stopped and turned toward my keeper. "I'd open it with my teeth, but I left them back in the walk."

My keeper nodded. "Very brave, little boy. Perhaps one of us will live to tell the Earth how brave you are."

He reached out and unlatched the door, pushing me in after. The room was much like the one I had just left, except for the light and the company. Behind a rude metal table sat a bearded fellow with a crown of brown hair circling his otherwise hairless dome. His facial features were identical to every representation of Jesus Christ I'd ever seen, except for the dark, haunted eyes. He pointed at a stool before the table. "Sit. My name is Rudy Vegler." He nodded toward a figure seated in the shadows. "You have already met Raymond."

I lowered myself onto the stool, trying to make out the face of the number-two Terranist. I had seen him at the news conference, but for some reason couldn't remember his face. My keeper stood behind me, his gun at the ready. Both Vegler and the one called Raymond wore surface gear.

"Why am I here?"

Vegler nodded slightly. "Yes, Mark Lambert, why are you here? You are alive because we cannot answer that question. Tell us."

I laughed. I suppose I resigned myself to being a dead man, and that helped ease my tension. After I was dead, I couldn't be hurt. Go out with style, or something stupid like that. "I didn't kill twenty men and women and drag me here. You tell me."

Vegler shook his head. "It was only eighteen." He leaned forward, the red band of his surface suit against the edge of the table. "Lambert, do you know what being surfaced is?"

"No."

"We kick you outside with no suit." He rubbed the side of his nose. "I understand that boiling blood is a very, very painful way to go." He smiled, exposing a gap in twin rows of yellowing teeth.

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"Of course, those in a position to know are in no position to tell. Why are you here?"

I shrugged. "Honesty won't get me any points. Why should I tell you?"

Vegler dropped his smile. "Lambert, we don't have time to waste—you don't have time to waste. Why are you on Luna?"

There it was: the question. I dropped my glance to the red band around Vegler's chest. "I'm a sound tech with the *Los Angeles Telejournal*. I was sent up with Harvy Dubord to cover . . . "

Vegler held up his hand. "I said we don't have time." He lowered it to the table. "Feed your cover story to the lockwatchers, but to us, nothing but the truth."

With puffy lips, missing teeth, and blood dribbling from my mouth, I managed the best sneer I could. "Why should I tell you anthing? You're going to kill me, aren't you?"

"No decision has been made."

I snorted, dribbling more blood down my chin and coveralls. "I saw you bastards slaughter innocent men and women with less compassion than I throw out my garbage."

In the shadows, the one called Raymond uttered a brief, bitter laugh. "Lambert, we have more compassion for your garbage than we do for the munies." He leaned forward, bringing his face into the light. His fine blond hair was matted and caked with blood, his skin pale and greenish around his almost delicate jaw. The narrow-set, pale blue eyes were almost hypnotic in their attraction. "Lambert, we are evacuating this site. When we leave, we will make it useless. What we need to know is whether or not it is worth our while to spend surface gear, water, and air on your survival."

I turned to Vegler. "I find it hard to believe that anything I can say will improve my chances one bit."

Vegler rubbed his nose. "The information we have from Earthside says you are a reporter working undercover for the *L.A. Telejournal*. Your exact assignment is somewhat vague, but it concerns an investigation into the possible manipulation of news from Luna."

I felt as though Ahmis, the happy jailer, had tapped me again with his gun butt. Only five persons knew: me, my editor, the publisher, the lawyer called in to hand out a heap of ignored advice, and the New York Bureau Chief, Margate. But Margate had said that to feed a fake ID to the MAC VI would involve developing mob contacts. You tell the mob and you tell anyone who has the

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price of a whisper. It had been assumed that no one on Luna, particularly the Terranists, could raise the ante. "If you know that, why the question? Why not just kill me and be done with it?"

Vegler unlatched the collar ring on his suit, pulled the seal to the middle of his chest, reached inside and scratched. "Tell me, Lambert: is this information we've discovered, or crap that we've been fed?"

"What difference does it make?"

"If it's true, you live; if not . . ." Vegler pointed up, towards the surface.

"What else would I be?"

"A police spy."

I smiled and immediately regretted it as the throb in my cheek grew. "What about you? What if this is some production number by the police to get me to admit to something?"

Vegler resealed his suit. "You overestimate your importance. It will be a long time before the lockwatchers have a commandant killed just to ferret out a reporter." He raised his eyebrows. "That would be even too extreme for us."

I shrugged. "What if I am what you say I am?"

Vegler looked at Raymond. Number-two man nodded a permission, then leaned back into the shadows. Vegler turned back to me. "Then you may be of some use to us. We have been trying to get the truth to Earth for a long time."

"Terranist truth."

"Explain."

"I'm not here to do propaganda pieces for the Terranist League. Remember, I've seen your killers in action, and all it does is confirm everything I've ever seen or heard about the Terranists."

"Be that as it may, Lambert, there is still the small matter of convincing us that you are a reporter. If you can't, it's the last time you'll see anyone or anything in action."

I think that, for the first time since entering that room, I began believing I might somehow get out of my predictament in one piece. "What do you want to know?"

"Begin with why none of the registers, the official ones, list you as a reporter."

"I never have been listed as a reporter. It's a new position for me, but because of its nature, I couldn't be listed." Vegler was frowning. "Look, up until a few weeks ago, I was a sound tech. But I've been trying to get in reporting for years. I'd pestered the station editor about it so many times, he told me to come up with

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an idea and, if it was any good, he'd see. He liked my idea."

"What was the idea?"

"To come up here as a sound tech, poke around and see if the governor's office has anything to hide. I got the idea from a camera jock who was with our team covering the capture of Tralcor. The story he told me about the press conference didn't seem to have anything to do with what the reporters on Luna put on the tape loops."

Vegler nodded. "And?"

"Then I overheard one of our reporters a few days later. He had been assigned the story, but Immigration rejected his blood test. The *Telejournal* sent Harvy Dubord instead, and the reporter I overheard was complaining. Dubord is what we call a 'safe' voice—a reporter the government can count on not to embarrass it." I felt as though my fingers were about to fall off, and nodded back over my right shoulder. "Is there something you can do about my hands?"

"We're doing it. Go on."

"Well, I thought of another reporter that had been turned down, then did some checking. From the *Telejournal*, at least, nothing but safe voices have ever been sent to Luna since the Plague. That includes writers as well as . . . "

Vegler held up his hand. "And you suspected that the government was using the blood tests as a way of screening reporters?"

"Yes."

"For what purpose?"

I shrugged, sending darts of pain from my wrists up my arms. "I don't know. That's what I'm here to find out."

Vegler looked at Raymond, then turned back toward me. "One more question: How did you plan on getting your tapes back to Earth?"

"The mass drivers. The *Telejournal* has arranged for a small ship to pick the tapes out of the dirt track before they reach the catcher station." My throat felt raw from the dryness. "From there, the tapes would be taken to the New Eden industrial station at El Five and then broadcast."

"I see." Vegler nodded. "Wouldn't those pulses in the driver wipe the tapes?"

I started to shake my head, but thought better of it. "I had a specially shielded case. It was with me at the news conference. . . ."

Vegler nodded at my keeper. I felt the muzzle of his gun dig in

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between my shoulder blades. "Get up, laddie."

I stood and heard the door open behind me. I kept my eyes on Vegler. "Well?"

"Well, what?"

"Do I live or die?"

Vegler shook his head. "As I said, no decision has been made." He nodded again at the guard and I felt a hand fall on my shoulder. The guard turned me around and shoved me out into the walk. He followed and closed the door, pulling a long knife from the belt of his surface suit.

"Turn around." I felt the knife slip between my hands and the bonds part. Immediately, blood, feeling and pain began flowing from my arms into my hands. I turned and faced my keeper.

"I thought no decision had been made about letting me live."

The guard smiled, then rumbled forth another laugh. "Rudy hasn't made that decision about me, yet." He pointed down the walk toward my old room. "Let's go."

II.

Before the guard closed the door, plunging the room into darkness again, a quick look around showed me a small rectangular alcove carved out of solid rock. In the darkness, I felt along the walls finding nothing but moon dust. The stuff was everywhere. Grey, fine, and adhesive, the powder seemed to be in everything. Stock joke earthside: moon miners get greylung. The joke had come back with the original miners that operated the first experimental mines on Luna. But that was before the Plague and before the miners had been replaced by thousands of carriers sentenced to Luna to separate them from the rest of the population. At first, the press had called Luna the new Molokai, then simply the leper colony: one hundred and forty thousand carriers of a novel lifeform product of late 1980's recombinant DNA research known as "Megabug." They were guarded and managed by five thousand immunes, or "munies." For three generations, the leper colony had mined the mountains between Imbrium and Serenitatis, feeding the seven mass drivers that provided raw materials for the New Eden industrial station, which, in turn, fed products to Earth. But, the carriers wanted to come back, and Terranism was born.

I put my back against the wall and slid down to a sitting posi-

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tion. Rubbing my wrists, I thought back to my meeting with Vegler and Raymond. Why was I still alive? The Terranists had claimed responsibility for bombing the shuttle to El Five from Luna, a disaster that claimed the lives of fifteen young children among many others. Why would they spare my life simply because I'm innocent?

Voices again, outside the door. What use did they plan to make of me? I was no safe voice, but I certainly had no sympathy for the Terranists. The door unlatched, then opened, exposing Ahmis the guard. "Let's go, laddie."

"Where?" I pushed myself to my feet.

"It's time to fit you with some walking gear. Looks as though you'll be with us for a while."

III.

Endless hours later, clad in scavenged surface gear, a wide red band sprayed around my chest, I followed the doctor who patched up my head through a wide, low gallery lit by a single string of dim, green numbars. Even without being bound, I found movement difficult. To move forward in the clumsy gear, I had to lean forward as though I were trying to walk through a gale-force storm. To stop, I had to lean backwards and dig in. It took a few drifts to the floor of the gallery to polish my technique. The effort of getting back on my feet, as well as the strain of the bouncy pace we kept, soon mixed the acrid smell of the moon dust in the suit with my sweat, and the leftover smells of the previous occupant. Since my radio had been removed, the only sound I could hear were the circulation motor and my own breathing.

Ahead of the doctor, a string of Terranists made their way to the open end of the gallery. It opened on the dark side of a mountain, but sunlight from the slope opposite the entrance hurt my eyes. Behind, my faithful keeper Ahmis kept a close watch on me. He had chuckled as he showed me how to patch the holes in the suit's plastic lining with crosses of plastic tape. I had asked the cause of his humor, and he pointed out, in detail, how the suit was obtained from its previous occupant.

While she cleaned my wound and covered it with plastiskin, the doctor had remained silent. She bounced along in front of me, and came to a halt at the gallery entrance. Leaning backward and digging in, I managed not to run into her. Ahmis pulled up beside

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me and we could all see a figure in front, outside the entrance, giving hand signals. In a few moments, the doctor started off and Ahmis and I followed. Behind us were, perhaps, ten others.

Outside the gallery, I saw that we were on one of the old access roads. The old mounting braces for the ore-belt supports could be seen every few meters, which meant that we were still in the Caucasus. Far in front, a six-wheeled ore extractor turned right off the road and headed down a large gully. Those in front turned and followed after. As we walked out of the mountain's shadow, I saw the rim of Calippus. It had to be. Calippus was the largest crater near the ore belt system, which meant we were far north of Bee Town. An hour or more later, we reached the end of the gully and gathered again. As I looked around, I could see thirty-two in surface suits. One of them mounted the ore extractor and entered the airlock. Soon after, the figure emerged and the extractor turned right again and headed off across the low rolling hills toward the darkness of the higher Caucasus west of Calippus. Those of us on foot turned left and headed south.

As my suit struggled to keep out the blistering heat, I began feeling dizzy. I kept up, but before I realized what was happening, the doctor had fallen back beside me and had plugged a black cord from her helmet into mine.

"How do you feel, Lambert?"

I laughed. "After getting my head beat in with rifle stocks, how do you expect me to feel?"

"Are you dizzy; a little sick to your stomach?"

"Yes."

She held up her hand and Ahmis stopped next to us. She pulled the air coupling from my pack and inserted it into a cup she pulled from a pouch at her belt. I could feel that no air was entering my system, and began to panic, but she soon plugged the coupling back in and my nostrils were assaulted with an new odor: something like rotted leaves mixed with some kind of commercial hand cream. "The feeling should be gone in an hour or so." She pulled the cord from my helmet and wound it up and attached it to her own. As she turned and followed the others, Ahmis tapped my shoulder and pointed after her. I leaned forward and followed.

I looked from the black sky to the Earth hanging huge over the horizon and wondered what purpose I was serving. One bouncing foot in front of the other, each one lifting that grey dust that settled quickly to the surface again. As I reached a slight rise I could see wheel prints in the dust extending off toward the golden tan

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horizon. We followed the tracks for another hour or two until we reached the end of another abandoned access road. At that point, my dizziness had cleared up but the effort of walking with mostly unfamiliar muscles had my legs aching. Hand signals went up for a halt, and I turned to see how our passage had marked the Lunar surface, but no tracks could be seen. At the end of the column two figures with what looked like hockey sticks were erasing the evidence. The column moved again, then walked into the shadow of a cliff and stopped.

The doctor turned and connected the cord from her helmet to mine. "Is the dizziness gone?"

"Yes." She reached up her hand to pull the plug. "Wait. As long as we're stopped, could we talk for a while?"

"Why?"

"I'd like to ask a few questions." She reached up again to pull the cord. "Look, if you people want your side reported, you're going to have to talk to me."

She hesitated, then dropped her hand. "What do you want to know?"

I sighed, grateful to have someone to talk to. "Well, to begin, what's your name, doctor?"

"Kit."

"Kit what?"

"You'll find most of us use single names, usually adopted. We still have families in the pits." Her voice came through the speaker cold and brittle.

"What about Rudy Vegler?"

"The lockwatchers killed his family when he was just a boy, right after he joined the Terranist League."

"Why are you a Terranist?"

She gave a sharp laugh. "The same as everyone else, Lambert: to go back to Earth." She reached up, pulled the plug and turned away. More hand signals from up front, and the column moved out.

As we bounced down the road past dark, abandoned mine entrances, I thought of the Terranist goals and could almost understand. The novelty of being on Earth's moon had worn off tense hours ago, and seeing that blue-white globe hanging above the bleak, grey, airless mountains made me long for fresh air, trees, and water. To be able to stretch my naked arms in the sunlight, to splash into a clear pool, even to scratch when I felt like it, had become luxuries beyond price. It would seem even dearer to those

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who have never been to Earth, and the band of cutthroats I'd seen were at least third, possibly fourth generation carriers. But they were carriers, and could never come home to Earth. The Terranists had no sympathy on Earth; to let them back on the planet meant certain death for at least four-fifths of the human race. I looked at the Great Lakes and took a sip of warm, tasteless water through the tube in my helmet.

As the column reached a sharp turn in the old access road, hand signals went up and we fled off the road back into the shadows. I looked up and saw a formation of four police fighters streak toward Calippus. We waited for a few moments, then were motioned back on the road. Ahead, five-wheeled vehicles turned right off the main road onto a track that led straight into the mountain. As I came abreast of the feeder road and turned, I saw it enter the opening of one of the countless abandoned mine shafts that dotted the base of the mountain.

Inside the shaft, we came to a gallery-wide airlock and stepped in, leaving the vehicles outside. After a few moments, I could feel the pressure of the chamber equalizing the pressure of my suit. Vegler, Ahmis, and the others removed their helmets, and I fooled with the lock on mine until it opened, allowing me to push my helmet back. Ahmis reached out a beefy hand and shut down my suit's systems.

Vegler turned to me. "All the gear we picked up at the news conference will be brought in. Identify yours and bring it with you. Ahmis will show you the way."

"Would it be a breach of security to ask why?"

"You're about to do your first story from the leper colony; that's what you're here for, isn't it?"

I ground my teeth a little—the ones that remained. "I said I'm not here to do puff pieces for the Terranist League. What makes you think I will?"

"Two things: first, it doesn't matter whether you approve or not, the Terranists exist and they are news. Or are you one of those safe voices you mentioned?"

"No." What could I do but agree; he was right. "What was the second thing?"

Vegler grinned. "With your mouth shut, you're no use to your station, the munies, or to us. You may as well be skinny dipping in the moon dust."

I nodded. Both points were well taken.

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IV.

Loaded with my equipment, Ahmis and I followed Vegler and three other Terranists through the dark shafts until we came to a section lit with numbars. The greenish light, dim and flickering, mixed with mournful, wailing voices. It took a moment to realize this was singing. We moved around a slight turn in the shaft and were waved on by a red-banded figure in the distance. Where the sentry stood, the shaft seemed to narrow to a single passageway almost two meters wide, but, as we came closer, I saw that the gallery walls had been filled in with rough-cut blocks.

I entered the passage behind Vegler and saw that the gallery had been divided into rooms, and in the rooms were people. Only a few steps into the mine shaft town, the smell of the ever present moon dust was overpowered by the smells of unwashed bodies, urine, and burnt grease. A very old woman, her legs missing from the knees down, sat in the passageway and reached out a hand toward Vegler as he passed. The Terranist stopped, squatted, and touched the old woman's cheek with the palm of his hand. She took his hand in hers, kissed it, then released it. Vegler watched as she nodded, smiled, and pulled herself into a dark doorway. He looked down at the dusty floor for a second, then stood and looked at me.

I pointed toward the dark doorway. "What was that, a Terranist groupie?" Vegler backhanded me across my face with the armored glove of his surface suit sending me sprawling into Ahmis, then onto the floor. He turned and stormed off. Ahmis grabbed my shoulder and pulled me to my feet. "What is she, his mother?"

Ahmis reached down and picked up my equipment, dumping it into my arms. "No. She's just an old woman."

"What happened to her legs?"

"Mine accident, like a lot of old people here."

A bit weavey on my feet, I stumbled off after Vegler. There were many dark doorways, and many old faces. The deeper we got into the area, the stronger became the smells. Ahead, Vegler turned into one of the doorways. Before entering, I stopped and faced Ahmis. "What is this place?"

"This is where you go when you're too old to work the mines. We call it the boneyard."

Ahmis pointed at the doorway, and I turned and entered. The dark room looked and smelled like all the others. Its single difference was a false wall where the hard rock of the gallery should

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have been. Ahmis nodded toward it, and I stepped through into a black, narrow hall. Feeling along the rough walls with my fingertips, I made a turn and saw white light ahead. A few steps further and I entered a smooth-walled, white chamber with a low ceiling set with yellowish-white light panels. Along the far wall stood racks of weapons. On either side of the racks were closed doors and immediately in front of me were several metal chairs and a table. Vegler stood with his back toward me, talking to Kit and a frail old fellow dressed in coveralls. It took a moment, but I finally made the face. It was Charles Towne, the molecular biologist stationed with the Luna Immune contingent, kidnapped by the Terranists four years earlier and presumed dead.

Vegler cocked his head in my direction. "Towne, this is Lambert, the reporter I told you about."

Towne's watery blue eyes darted at me, then back to Vegler. "If I cooperate, then you'll release me?"

"We'll see." Vegler looked at me. "This is your show; how do you want to work it?"

I shrugged, then looked around the room. "I'll set my stuff up, then we'll just sit down and talk. . . . Will we be going someplace other than this room?"

"Perhaps."

"Then I may need someone to work the camera in transit."

Vegler scratched his chin and looked at Ahmis standing next to me. The Terranist guard had his arms loaded with gear. "You feel like a camera jock, Ahmis?"

The guard grinned. "Sure, Rudy." Ahmis lowered the gear to the floor, removed the gloves to his surface suit and rubbed his hands together. "Where do we start, laddie?"

I raised an eyebrow at Vegler. He smiled and sat in one of the metal chairs. "Whenever you're ready, Lambert."

V.

Hours later, I sat in the room staring at the five-centimeter screen of my editor, trying to shake off the feeling that more had gone on at the interview than I had gotten on tape. I skipped over some experimenting Ahmis had done with the camera's zoom lens, checked the index and stopped, backed, then stopped again. I pushed the playback and watched a miniature representation of

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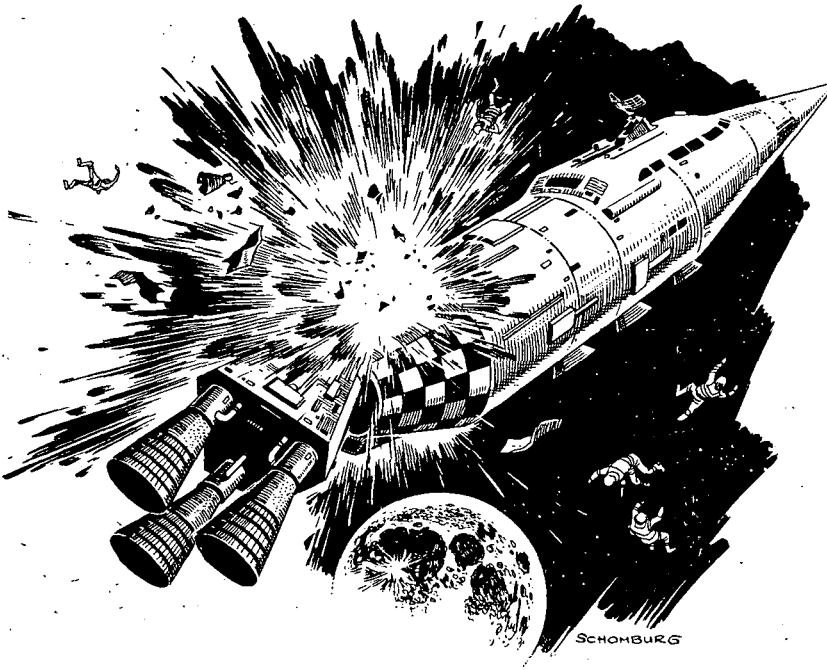

Charles Towne rub his nose, then fold his arms.

"The Lunar Genetic Center was established in '91, immediately after the contained carrier population had been removed to the moon. The original purpose of the center was, in effect, to find a cure for the carriers."

Lambert. "You said 'original purpose.' The purpose changed then?"

Towne squirmed, looked off screen, then looked back at Lambert and nodded. "It was when the New Eden station at El Five was just beginning construction—before my time."

Lambert: "About 2005."

Towne: "Yes. Well, you see the Center had been examining both carriers and immunes on Luna on a regular basis. The nucleotide sequence that gave immunity to the so-called megabug had been identified. But, another thing was beginning to make itself evident: The particular strain of *E. Coli* that carried the recombined plasmids that were found to be pathogenic . . ."

Lambert: "The megabug."

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Towne: "Yes. Well, the frequency of occurrence appeared to diminish as time passed. Samples on record show . . . "

Lambert: "You mean the bug was dying out?"

Towne: "It did die out. No traces have been found since 2008."

Lambert: "You mean that the carrier population has been free of the disease since '08? They could be returned to Earth with no harmful effects?"

Towne nodded. "That's when the Center's purpose changed. By then, Luna had four mass drivers and the New Eden station was beginning to supply products to Earth. The mass drivers had to be fed, and it was decided to keep the news secret until they could be sure. All information concerning the so-called plague was collected and filed at the center."

Lambert: "And?"

Towne: "And that's where the situation stands today, sixty years later."

Vegler: "Except that now there are seven mass drivers to feed." The picture moved until Vegler's head filled the tiny screen.

Lambert: "What you're saying, then, is that the carrier population—actually, its descendents—are being used as . . . as . . . "

Vegler: " 'Slaves' is the word you're looking for."

Lambert: "For what possible reason?"

Vegler: "The original miners on Luna were well paid and their quarters and facilities were extravagent. You've seen Bee Town?"

Lambert: "Yes."

Vegler: "That was the original settlement, but now the immunes live there. The immunes pay us in food and minimal living conditions. They literally control the air we breathe. You've seen how we live; it's cheaper."

I pushed the stop and looked at Vegler's frozen face. If true, that would explain what the United States of Earth had to hide on Luna. But how much of Towne's statement could be trusted? Towne and Kit had taken me into another room, crammed with equipment and wire files. They showed me slides, documents, records, and other things the Terranists had snatched at the Center when they kidnapped Towne. But I couldn't judge what I'd seen. All of us had guns stuck in our ears. Even so, just finding Charles Towne alive would make the story, not to mention the followup potential in a story on carrier living conditions. If it was true that the bug had died, so much the better. It would be the coverup of

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the century. Just thinking of the number of high officials and different administrations that must have been involved to pull it off made my mouth water. It was true; no one on Earth would lift a finger to help the carriers, even if the bug had died out sixty years before.

I went fast forward until I saw Vegler stabbing his finger at the air, then hit the play. ". . .like the Indians on the old reservations. They don't ask why they wound up on the reservations; all they can think of is that the government has been paying their upkeep. Why, then, should anyone give them back their land? That's what they think of us now. A planetoid full of welfare bums; why should we let them back on Earth? We do that, and the next thing you know, they'll want their properties back."

Lambert: "Will terrorism turn that indifference into sympathy?"

Vegler shook his head. "No. But we're not looking for sympathy."

Lambert: "What, then?"

Vegler: "Action."

Lambert: "You are, of course, aware that the few Terranist apologists on Earth have made the claim that the present containment of carriers is based on a hoax. It's regarded as nothing but Terranist propaganda."

Vegler: "Those pictures in your school books, the streets choked with black, rotting corpses, won't be countered by words alone. Before, you asked what we hoped to accomplish by bombing the shuttle to El Five. It's simple. We're giving them new pictures of horror to counter the old. If we make them horrible enough, we'll get the action we seek. . . ."

I hit the stop. But then, if words won't do it, why go to all the trouble of keeping me alive to conduct an interview? That's what was bothering me. The edited tape loop had been packed in the shielded case, and the case given to a party to put in one of the mass drivers. They could just ditch the case, but what would be the point? They could have accomplished the same thing just by killing me at the news conference. I feather-touched the back button and hit the play.

". . . new pictures of horror to counter the old. If we make them horrible enough . . ." I hit the stop, ejected the tape and picked the first tape off the table, feeling sick to my stomach. I hit the fast forward and watched the miniature figures jerk about until the one named Kit sat still for a moment, looking at the one called Mark Lambert. Stop. Back. Play.

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Lambert: ". . . seems to me, that with the training and equipment you and Towne need to do the checks on the carriers, and to understand all this, you ought to be able to do your own recombinant DNA work."

Kit: "Such as?"

Lambert: "Well, on Earth the research has many applications in food production, medicines—things that could improve conditions up here."

Kit looked at Towne, then leveled her eyes at Lambert, a hint of a smile on her lips. "We've done a little of that, yes. . . ." I hit the stop and turned off the editor.

I just bet they'd done a little of that. ". . . new pictures of horror. . . ." The tape container would be picked up from the dirt track, taken to the New Eden station and opened, releasing . . . what? Two and a half million men, women, and children were at New Eden. I felt my skin prickle as I realized that cargo and passenger shuttles to Earth left New Eden in a steady stream. The Earth . . .

Kit entered the room from the door to the right of the rifle racks, looked at my face and smiled. "It looks as though you figured it out." She raised a rifle and pointed it at me. All I could do was sit there with my mouth hanging open. I looked at the floor and examined the equipment there. The signal coder by which I would know when the pickup had been accomplished was gone. If I had it, I could signal the pickup ship to abort. I looked at Kit. "Rudy has it."

"Where is he? You don't understand; I've got to stop him!"

She laughed. "If I wouldn't understand, who would?"

"You don't know what you're doing!"

She waved the muzzle of her rifle at me. "Stay seated and stay alive, Lambert. . . ." Before she could finish, I reached under the table and turned it over on her. The edge of the table deflected her rifle toward the ceiling. She fired, the rifle's blinding white beam blowing rocks and rock powder down on both of us. Without stopping, I ran across the overturned table, then kicked her in the side of her head. I picked up the rifle and a helmet sitting on one of the chairs. I seated the helmet in place as I headed toward the door, wondering why the helmet locks were so easy to work. I had taken my gloves off to work the editor. I went back for them, clipped them into the suit's cuffs and bounced down the dark passage, turned and came to the false wall. It was a sliding slab of rock, perhaps as thick as ten centimeters. I could see a crack of light

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along one edge, but couldn't find a lock. I pushed on the slab, trying to move it, but it didn't even shake.

Unslinging the rifle, I aimed it at the crack and fired. The slab shattered diagonally, opening the upper part of the entrance. Ahmis's surprised face stared back at me. Jumping through the opening, I slammed the stock of my rifle into his face and ran over him into the passage. Faces, up and down the passage, were sticking out of dark doorways.

I turned left and bounced back the way I had been led in. Where the shaft opened, I looked for the guard, but he was gone. I stepped out into the open part and a rifle bolt flashed over my head from behind me. I turned and saw Ahmis, blood running from his nose, bounding down the passage. I lifted my rifle, but there were too many others in the passage behind him. I turned and ran, stopping when I reached the slight turn in the shaft. As Ahmis came through the opening, I fired several times, filling the shaft at his end with moon dust.

I knew I had missed him as I turned and bounded off into the unlit shaft ahead. In moments, I was at the large airlock. I checked my suit's systems, closed the face plate, opened the door and stepped in. At the other end of the lock, I felt for the valve set in the door, found it and turned it wide open. In a few moments my suit was tight and I undogged the outside door and opened it. It was weighted to close automatically behind me to make the cell operational for the next person wanting out. Since that next person was going to be Ahmis, I picked up a fist-sized stone and jammed it in the closing door. It held.

One of the wheeled vehicles along the side of the gallery was missing. I climbed up on the next and lowered myself into the tubular-frame driver's seat and studied the few controls. It was a simple cargo rover with little more than a charge indicator, throttle, brake, and steering wheel. I moved the throttle to the reverse position and the rover jerked to life and swayed out of the shaft entrance. The road was wide at the entrance and I backed around, turned the wire mesh wheels downhill, and gave it forward throttle.

In moments I reached the main access road, then stopped, wondering where to go next. To the left I knew the road just ended, but Vegler and company might have gone that way to avoid the security police. But—however they went, they'd have to wind up at the mass drivers, and that's where the old ore belt access roads went. I turned right and gave the rover full throttle forward.

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The road went straight, until it ran into a tee where two old ore belt routes joined. The mass drivers were south of Calippus. I turned right, held on for dear life around a curve and stopped just in time to miss an ore extractor making its way across the road. Behind it, raised on metal frame supports every few meters, was the beginning of the ore belt system in use. From the mountain rising to my right, smaller belts led from gallery entrances to dump their loads onto the main belt.

I swung around the ore extractor and followed the access road in and out of the forest of ore belt supports. To my left, the emptiness of Serenitatis made me stop and think. As the rover came to a halt, I tried to visualize the layout of the mass drivers and ore belt system. The drivers were at the edge of the *mare*, directly south of the eastern Caucasus, which is where I had to be if I could see Serenitatis. When the road turned to the right to follow the line of the mountains, I turned off the road and continued south.

In minutes I was lost. All landmarks had dropped below the short horizon and my only directional aids were the rover tracks stretching out behind me. Although not much help to me, they would be invaluable to Ahmis as he rolled down the access road and saw the tracks running off across Serenitatis pointing a big red arrow at my back. I leaned forward to put full throttle to the rover, but found it already at maximum. The charge indicator showed negative, and in bright sunlight. I pulled up, stood and stepped on the seat to check the solar cell panel. There must have been a centimeter of moon dust on it. I brushed off what I could with my arm and turned to step down off the seat. In the distance, a flash of silver followed by another announced the mass driver complex.

I quickly checked back the way I had come, but Ahmis was nowhere in sight. My stunt at the airlock must have worked. I dropped into the seat, hit the throttle, and headed toward where I remembered the glint of silver. The charge indicator was still negative, but less so. In a moment, it didn't matter. As I reached a slight rise, the kilometers of gleaming bars and whizzing buckets of the mass driver complex stretched out right to left, from horizon to horizon. The buckets scooped up a load at the slow end dump, then were propelled by synchronized magnetic pulses along the length of the tracks until they reached escape velocity. At the fast end, the buckets opened, shooting the compacted ore into the dirt track orbit where the catcher station gathered it up. The

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buckets were decelerated and returned to the slow end for another pickup. The buckets I could see were slowing from left to right, and I turned right toward the slow end.

The rover lurched and bounced around a small, house-sized crater, then up a steep hill. From the crest I could see the cargo rover Vegler and his group had taken next to three rovers mounted with environmental support vans bearing the insignia of the security police. Behind them rose the long, tapered bin of the dump being fed by two huge ore trunk belts. A flash from one of the police rovers kicked up the dust in front of me and I turned left and headed for the dark safety of the spaces underneath the mass driver tracks. More flashes and it seemed as though I was caught in a dust storm. The dust cleared, and I realized the rover wasn't moving. The two wire mesh tires on the right side looked like aluminium spaghetti. I jumped off the left side and bounded for the driver tracks.

As I approached the tracks, bringing my attention with me in the form of police fire, answering fire aimed at the police vans began coming from under the tracks. A red banded figure stood out from behind a support and waved me on. When I was within five meters of the shadows, I was lifted from behind, slammed into one of the inside track supports, then buried in moon dust.

My head swam and I drifted in and out of consciousness as I felt hands digging me out. My body felt like a sack of broken glass. Gloved fingers wiping the dust off my face plate; Vegler's face looking back at me. He pulled a black cord from his helmet and plugged it into mine.

"Lambert?"

"You monster," I hissed. "Where is the case?"

A beam flashed behind Vegler's helmet, but he didn't seem to notice. "It's gone. Who told you, or did you figure it out?"

"Does it make a difference?"

"Lambert, the lockwatchers will be on us in a few seconds. You answer me now, or I'll fry a hole through your head."

"That seems to be the Terranist answer to everything; can't get an answer, fry a hole in somebody's head. Can't go back to Earth, wipe out the damned human race. . . ."

"Shut up and listen. What's in that case is something that will make megabug look like a case of diaper rash by comparison. . . ."

"That should get some attention, Vegler. . . ."

"You're damned right it will! But, there's something else. The

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bug Kit and Doc Towne cooked up takes from two to four months to kill, and no one on Earth knows a cure for it. Even if they did, it would take them two or three months to begin production. . . ."

"My god, Vegler . . ."

"Listen. We have a cure; another organism that can compete successfully with the first. We have enough of it stashed away in abandoned mine shafts right now to immunize everyone on Earth. When we go back to Earth, we'll bring it with us."

"Blackmail."

"Yes. You have a better solution?"

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Lambert, we need time—eight or ten days for the organism to spread. If they know what's going on, they'll be able to contain it at the New Eden station. . . ."

I laughed, then stopped as I felt the loose ends of a couple of ribs grind together. "What is it, Vegler? You want me to keep my mouth shut, is that it?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you just shut it?"

Vegler seemed to have the same look on his face that he had when he touched the old woman's cheek back in the boneyard. "I don't want to kill you, Lambert. Someday, when it's a time for law again, we'll need people with your naïve abhorrence of violence."

"How do you expect me to keep quiet? My god, even if they do finally agree, you know how long that would take? You know how slowly governments work."

"Why should we be the only ones who have to pay for the government's inertia?"

Breathing came very hard. Someone ran by Vegler and tapped him on the helmet as he passed. "Vegler, how do I know you have a cure? . . ." Pieces of rock showered down on us. The lockwatchers were closing in.

"Kit—" Vegler teetered, then fell over on top of me. "On the road—" A loud ringing in my helmet, we were both lifted up, then slammed hard.

VI.

I opened my eyes, the memory of rotted leaves and hand cream

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still in my nostrils. I felt ill and Kit had taken my air hose. . . . But, was that proof? The white haze in front of my eyes swam, then shaped itself into a face. "Lambert?"

"Who are you?" I whispered.

The face turned. "Captain, I think he can talk now."

The first face left and another took its place. "I'm Captain Manion, Lambert. It's a real stroke you made it alive. The Terranists usually aren't that careless."

"Manion? Are you with the police?"

"Yes. I hate to question you now, but I have no other choice. What were they doing at the mass drivers? They know that if they mess with the drivers, we'll cut the air off to one of the residential galleries."

"Cut the air?"

"Yes. It sounds harsh, but we have to protect the drivers. Both Earth and the New Eden station depend on them." Manion must have seen the look on my face. "We wouldn't do it to production workers or anything vital; just one of the boneyards. You know, they're only carriers." He turned away and came back holding a small red plastic box. It was the signal coder and the pickup light was still off. The case was still in the dirt track. "You know what this is?"

I looked at the ten numbered keys. All I had to do was punch in four-four-three and the pickup would be aborted. That's all. "I don't know, Captain. It looks like a pocket calculator."

Manion raised his eyebrows and shrugged, then turned to the other one. "All right, doctor, you can have him back." He left the compartment. It lurched; we were in a police van.

The doctor's face swam into view. "Sorry we can't get you back to Earth right away, Lambert, but you're pretty banged up. We'll probably keep you for two weeks or so."

I closed my eyes. "That should be time enough."

"Enough for what?"

I opened my eyes and looked at the doctor. "The Terranists are planning an announcement about then."

"Oh?" The doctor peered at a plastic sack filled with clear liquid that drained from a tube into my arm. "More demands?"

I bit my lip and closed my eyes to force back the tears. "It's a surprise." Vegler at the interview: *"There are no innocents, Lambert. If because you do nothing, nothing is done, you are guilty. There is a time for terror. Perhaps you will come to understand this. . . ." I laughed.* "Where's Rudy Vegler?"

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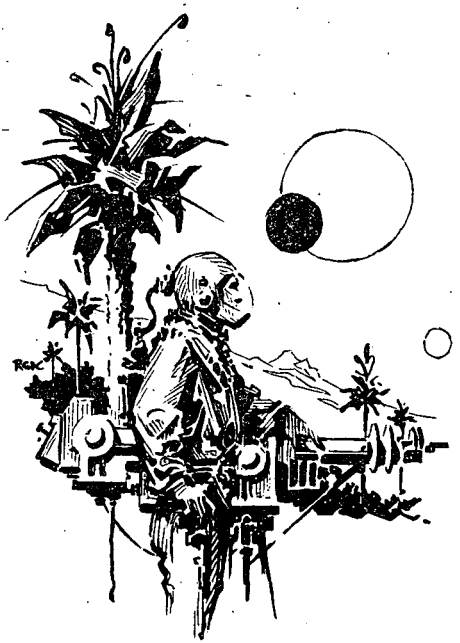
The doctor nodded toward the back of the compartment. Stacked like cordwood, the five Terranists, still in their torn, filthy, blood-caked surface suits, jiggled with the motion of the police rover across the Lunar landscape. On the bottom, nearest me, Rudy Vegler stared at me through a shattered faceplate with empty sockets. His skin was purple—almost black. "We got all of them."

I looked back at the doctor. "Not all. There's still a few left."

The doctor shrugged. "Ten or fifteen? Might as well be all. How can a dozen fanatics fight the entire world?" The doctor patted my arm, turned and left the compartment.

"As I said, doctor, it's a surprise." My voice sounded tinny in the empty compartment. The tears began to flow freely and I turned my head toward the pile of dead Terranists. "Damn you. Damn you, damn you, damn you!"



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PINK, BLUE, AND GREEN
by Martin Gardner

The humanoids who live on a small planet in the Milky Way, not far from our solar system, are divided into three races with skins that are pink, blue, and green. We'll call them the pinks, blues, and greens. Like earthlings, they are bilaterally symmetric, each with two legs, two arms, and one head with eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Also like earthlings, many of them have last names that stand for a color.

One afternoon three professors at a university on the planet were having lunch together in the faculty dining hall.

"Isn't it amazing," said Dr. Pink, "that our three last names are Pink, Blue, and Green, yet not one of us has a name that matches our skin?"

"It is indeed a remarkable coincidence," agreed one of the others as he stirred his drink with a blue hand.

"The hall is crowded today," observed Dr. Green, "but there seem to be very few greens in the room."

Pink glanced around. "Yes," he said. "There are more than three greens having lunch but certainly not more than a flink." ("Flink" is the local word for what we call a dozen.)

"This gives me an idea for a brain teaser," said Dr. Blue, the only mathematician in the group. "Perhaps Gardner can use it for his regular feature in *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*."

"How does it go?" asked Pink.

"Like this," said Blue. "I count exactly 80 pink arms on the persons sitting here, and half as many blue arms. If you add the number of pink persons to the number of blue persons, then add the number of eyes on all the greens, you get a grand total of 81. I wonder if Gardner's readers can deduce how many greens are having lunch?"

Green thought about the problem, then began to chuckle. "Excellent, Blue," he said. "You must radio it to Gardner as soon as we finish eating. Of course you should add that the count of legs, arms, and eyes includes us three, and that no one in the room is missing an arm, leg, or eye."

How many greens are having lunch? The answer is on page 79.

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THE SF CONVENTIONAL CALENDAR
by Erwin S. Strauss

With the cold weather here, an SF con(vention) is a great way to get out of the house, and still spend the weekend indoors. Meet your favorite authors, artists, and editors for a social weekend soon. When writing, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE). When calling cons (or me), call 10 AM to 10 PM only, not collect, and identify yourself and your reason for calling. If you can't reach a con, call me at (301) 794-7718. If my machine answers, leave your number; I'll call you back. For a later, longer list of cons—and a sample of SF folksongs—send a long SASE to me at 10015 Greenbelt Road #101, Seabrook MD 20801.

Boskone, Feb. 16-18; Boston MA. Herbert. **Box G, MIT PO, Cambridge MA 02139. (617) 244-2679**

DunDraCon, Feb. 17-19, San Fran. CA. SF/fantasy game con. **386 Alcatraz, Oakland CA 94618**

CoastCon, Mar. 9-11, Biloxi MS. G. R. R. Martin. **Box D-182, Biloxi MS 39532. (601) 374-2933**

NorWesCon, Mar. 23-25, Seattle WA. Phil Farmer. **Box 24207, Seattle WA 98124. (206) 822-9129**

AggieCon, Mar. 29-Apr. 1, College Sta. TX. **MSC Box 5718, Col. Sta. TX 77844. (713) 845-1515**

OrangeCon, Mar. 30-Apr. 1, Orlando FL. **Box 15072B, Orlando FL 32858. (305) 275-5957**

LunaCon, Mar. 30-Apr. 1, New York NY. **Cole, 1171 E. 8th, Brooklyn NY 11230. (212) 252-9759**

AmberCon, Apr. 6-8, Wichita KS. Zelazny. **505 N. Rock #909, Wichita KS 67206. (316) 685-9436**

BaltiCon, Apr. 13-15, Baltimore MD. **BSFS, Box 686, Baltimore MD 21203. (301) 467-0868**

Kubla Khan, Apr. 27-29, Nashville TN. **647 Devon Drive, Nashville TN 37220. (615) 832-8402**

Just ImagiCon, May 25-27, Memphis TN. **4475 Martha Cole, Memphis TN 38118. (901) 365-2132**

V-Con, May 25-27, Vancouver, Can. **Box 48701 Bentall Sta., Vanc., BC V7X 1A6. (604) 263-9969**

PenultiCon, May 25-28, Denver CO. Sam Delany. **Box 11545, Denver CO 80211. (303) 433-9774**

MidWestCon, June 24-26, Cincinnati OH. **Tabakow, 3953 St. Johns Terr., Cincinnati OH 45236**

WesterCon 32, July 4-8, San Francisco CA. Lupoff. **195 Alhambra #9, San Francisco CA 94123**

Darkover Council, July 13-15, New York NY. Bradley. **Box 355 Bkln NY 11219. (516) 781-6795**

U[illegible]n, July 21-22, Tulsa OK. Jack Williamson & M. Middleton. **Box 4229, Tulsa OK 74104**

DeepSouthCon, July 20-22, New Orleans LA. **1903 Dante, New Orleans LA 70118. (504) 861-2602**

Conebulus, July 20-22, Syracuse NY. **C. G., 619 Stolp Av., Syracuse NY 13207. (315) 471-7003**

SeaCon, Aug. 23-27, Brighton (near London), England. The World SF Convention for 1979. Join now before the rates go up. **Jan Howard Finder, Box 428, Latham NY 12110. (518) 783-7673**

NorthAmeriCon, Aug. 30-Sept. 3, Louisville KY. The continental con, while the WorldCon is abroad. Fred Pohl, Lester Del Rey and our own George Scithers. Everything the WorldCon has but the Hugos—plus a river cruise. **Box 58009, Louisville KY 40258. (502) 636-5340**

NovaCon 9 (West), Nov. 2-4, Albany NY. "First British con in the US." **Contact SeaCon (above)**

Future Party, Nov. 22-25, Albany NY. **606 Alpine Vlge., E. Greenbush NY 12061. (518) 477-4320**

NutriaCon, Nov. 30-Dec. 2, N. Orleans LA. **6221 Wadsworth, N. Orl's LA 70122. (504) 283-4833**

NorEasCon II, Aug. 29-Sept. 1, 1980, Boston MA. The World SF Convention for 1980. Damon Knight, Kate Wilhelm, B. Pelz. Join now for $20. **Box 46, MIT PO, Cambridge MA 02139**

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DUELING CLOWNS

by Barry Longyear

art: Freff

Mr. Longyear's tales of Momus, the planet that was populated by the survivors of the circus space-ship Baraboo, *continue with one involving a truly horrid kind of duel, but one wholly appropriate for clowns . . .*

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Lord Allenby raised his eyebrows at the newsteller's apprentice, but the apprentice only shrugged. Allenby looked back at the master newsteller. His eyes fixed on the fire, Boosthit sat cross-legged, elbows on his knees, chin on his hands and a black scowl on his face. "Come, come, Boosthit. I've known you too long for this." The newsteller sat unmoving.

The apprentice scratched his head. "It's no use, Lord Allenby. He's been that way for a week."

Allenby shrugged. "I came by this fire and saw my old friend and expected to have grand times getting reacquainted. When I first came to Momus as the ambassador to the Ninth Quadrant, it was Boosthit who took news of my mission and played it in Tarzak."

The apprentice nodded. "He won't even talk to me."

Allenby looked closely at the apprentice. "You're one of the Montagne soldiers, aren't you?"

"Yes. In a year I'll be taking my retirement here on Momus. I'm on leave now looking into newstelling as an occupation for when I get out."

"Your name?"

"Forgive me. Sergeant Major Gaddis; I'm top soldier at orbital fighter base twenty-six."

Allenby nodded. "I'm pleased to meet you, Sergeant Major. Has newstelling been to your liking?"

The apprentice turned toward Boosthit, shook his head and turned back to Allenby. "I have no idea, Lord Allenby. I've been with him for a week, but I haven't heard any news yet."

Allenby looked at Boosthit. "Come, old friend, you haven't hit a dry spell, have you?" Boosthit's scowl deepened. "Why, there's news of galactic significance transpiring this very moment, with the commission from the United Quadrants coming to Momus. Then, there's the military buildup of the Tenth Quadrant forces to counter the Ninth's defense of this planet, and the ambassador from the Tenth Quadrant will be here in a few days to present his credentials; even my own office as statesman of Momus is in doubt. The UQ Commission will rule—"

Boosthit held up his hands. "Still yourself, Allenby; I have news!"

The sergeant major applauded. "Congratulations. That's more than I've heard him say for the entire week."

Boosthit glowered at the apprentice, then aimed his expression at Allenby. "As I said, I have news. I do not choose to recite it."

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Allenby smiled and nodded his head. "That bad, is it? I understand—"

"It is the best news I have ever had; it is great news! And, you would *not* understand!"

"Dear friend," Allenby held up his hands in a gesture of peace, "we have been through and seen much together over the past six years. You think I would lack understanding, or not appreciate great news?"

"It is what I think."

"What caused this? A newsteller with great news refusing to recite it? Do you think I wouldn't pay?"

Boosthit stood, walked to the boulders outside the light of the fire, then returned and sat down. He lifted an eyebrow in Allenby's direction. "You really want to hear my news?"

"Of course. I also want you to explain your strange behavior."

Boosthit pursed his lips, then nodded. "Very well. First, I shall tell you why I am reluctant." He turned to the sergeant major. "I recited my news to others such as this one, and I was treated very badly."

Allenby frowned. "You mean, to soldiers?"

"They were apprenticed, as this one is, but they were soldiers, yes."

Allenby turned to Gaddis. "The rules for visiting planetside are being observed, aren't they?"

"Yes, Lord Allenby. We are all familiarized with customs, traditions and occupations. When I am on duty, that training is part of my responsibility."

Allenby rubbed his chin and turned back to the newsteller. "Tell me what happened, Boosthit."

Boosthit gave the apprentice a suspicious glance, then held up his hands. "Very well. It happened at the first fire from Tarzak several days ago. I had rehearsed my news, and was anxious to take it on the road. As I said, it is great news."

"As you said."

Boosthit shrugged. "I approached the fire in the evening, and heard laughter coming from behind the rocks. I thought to myself that this was a lucky stroke, having a good audience my first night. But, when I stepped through the boulders, I saw that they were soldiers."

"You said they were apprenticed; how did you know they were soldiers?"

"They wear their robes badly, and sit funny." Boosthit cocked

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his head toward his apprentice. Gaddis had his knees together and sat back on his legs.

Gaddis shrugged. "It takes time to get used to going without trousers."

Allenby nodded. " I remember. Go on, Boosthit."

"Well, I turned to go, but they made such a fuss about me staying, that I changed my mind. That meant, of course, sitting through all of their amateur acts, but, I thought, business is business. I stayed. There was a priest's apprentice, and apprentices representing storytellers, tumblers, knife-throwers, and even one representing your own magicians, Allenby.

"After we bargained and ate, the first to rise was the apprentice priest. He did an almost acceptable job of reciting the epic of the circus ship *Baraboo* that brought our ancestors to Momus. Reluctantly, I parted with two movills for the fellow's performance, thinking to collect twenty times that amount after I dazzled those apprentices with my news.

"Then, the knife-thrower did a few turns on a piece of board he carried with him, but the act was of no consequence since he had no one standing in front of the board. Nevertheless, I parted with another two movills. Let it suffice to say that the tumblers and the magician were of similar quality. I could hardly keep my eyes open.

"Then, may his master's throat turn to stone, the apprentice storyteller began. He went on and on about a boy in a strange land named Pittsburg, and I could find no start nor middle to the tale. I recognized the ending because he stopped talking and another movill left my purse. But, then," a strange fire lit behind the newsteller's eyes as he stared off in a trance, "then, my turn came. I looked among their faces, and began:

"I, Boosthit of the Faransetti newstellers, sit before the fire this evening to tell you of the great duel between Kamera, Master of the Tarzak clowns, and Spaht, new Master of Clowns from Kuumic. It is news of heroics; a defense of the mighty being attacked by a hungry jackal. I, Boosthit, was witness to this event.

"Four days ago, I sat at the table of the Great Kamera, exchanging my news for entertainment, when the curtain to the street opened. Standing in the doorway was Spaht, garbed in yellow trousers with black polka dots, a vest of green and white stripes over a naked torso. On his bare neck, he wore a collar and bow tie. He wore white grease paint with red nose and upturned lips, the entire effect being capped with an orange fright wig and

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derby. He bowed to Kamera and said 'Now is the time, Kamera; be on the street in five minutes.'

"Kamera laughed. 'Fool, I cannot be bothered with challenges from every apprentice that passes by my door.'

" 'Apprentice? I am Spaht, Master of the Kuumic clowns!'

"Kamera waved an idle hand in the direction of the door. 'In that case, out damned Spaht! Out, I say!'

"Spaht bowed. 'I see I have entered the wrong house and found only great chimera.'

"Kamera squinted his eyes. 'Leave me. I shall be out as you requested.' Spaht bowed again, then left. In the quiet room, I saw the great clown sigh and reach under his table for his paints. His face was very sad.

" 'Surely, Great Kamera,' I said, 'this upstart does not worry you?'

"Kamera adjusted a looking glass and began putting on his makeup. 'Boosthit, it is ever thus for the greatest clown on Momus. Always there is another young punslinger lurking in the corners, waiting to build a reputation. It is not an easy life.'

"Kamera finished his makeup and put on a pure white suit, with large pompoms down the front. On his hairless head, he placed a white peaked cone. As he put on white slippers, I could see the frown under the painted smile.

" 'Spaht is different from the usual run of challenger, Great Kamera, isn't he?'

"He nodded. 'You saw what he was wearing. That garish costume, and the bow tie—he winds it up and it spins! Spaht has no sense of tradition; no honor. On the street this day, anything can be expected.'

"The two clowns squared off in the center of the dusty street. Warily, they circled each other, then Spaht opened, 'My uncle, a tailor, once made a magician very angry by making him a shirt that didn't fit.'

" 'Put him in a bad choler, did he?'

" 'Aye, and he turned my uncle into a tree.'

"All could see Kamera struggling, but he had no choice but to feed Spaht the straight line. 'Did it bother your uncle?'

" 'He didn't say; he was board.'

" 'Knot he!'

" 'But I avenged my uncle by thrashing the magician and throwing the rude fellow at my uncle's wooden feet.'

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" 'That was casting churl before pine.'

"As the dust cleared from the opening exchange, the two each had the other's measure. Kamera circled to get the sun out of his eyes. Spaht had a look of confidence on his face.

" 'Did you know,' said Spaht, 'that my nephew is related to the tiny flying cave creatures?'

" 'Yes, Spaht, I know. I stepped on one once and heard your nephew say 'Oh, my akin bat!'

"The crowd moaned. Cued by this, Spaht returned. 'Why should the clowns pay homage to you, Kamera? It seems that you are in your anecdotage.'

"Kamera smiled. 'Obeisance make the heart grow fonder.'

"Staggered, Spaht circled and began spinning his bow tie. 'My uncle, the tree . . . ,' he began.

" 'I saw him the other day, Spaht. I said 'that's yew all over.'

" 'We were so poor that at his funeral we could afford no music. All you could hear was the coughing—'

" 'There was catarrh playing, then?'

" 'Well, there was a coffin.' Spaht tried to rally, but Kamera scented blood. 'My . . . nephew lost consciousness and fell into a vat of stain. . . .'

" 'The good dye stunned.' Spaht fell to all fours and began crawling out of town. A cheer erupted from the crowd, and Kamera followed the beaten clown down the street. 'Crawl in a straight line, Spaht, or you will get contusions of meander. . . .' "

Boosthit looked down to deliver the punchline at Allenby, but the Great Statesman of Momus was gone. " . . . he . . ." He turned and found Gaddis missing as well. Rushing between the boulders, he could see two dark shapes running together toward Tarzak.

"Strange," said the newsteller, rubbing his chin, "if Allenby knew what the soldiers did, why did he ask?"

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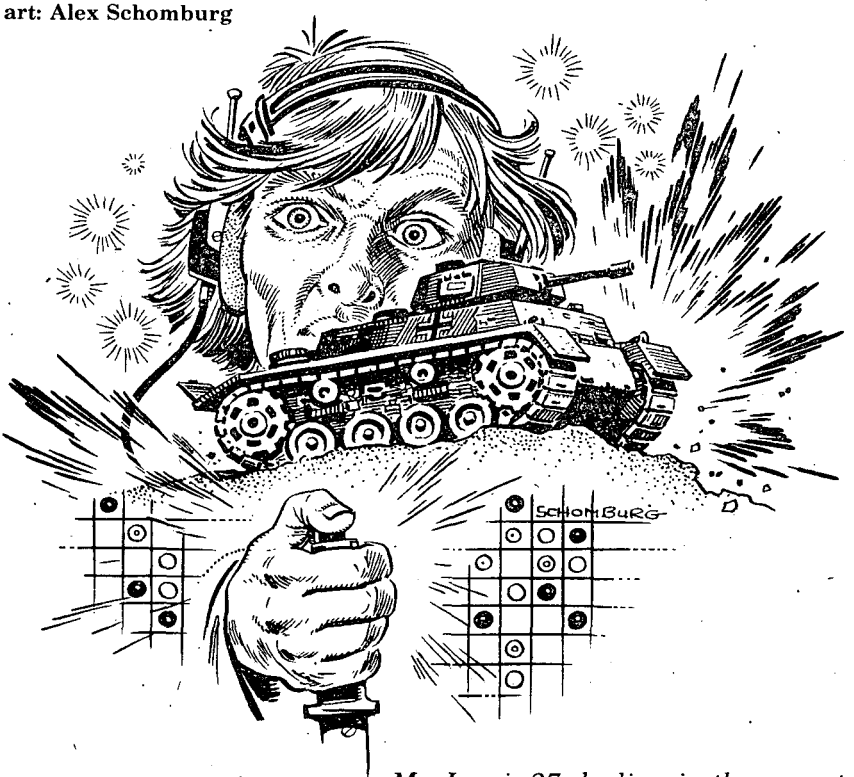
TANK

by Francis E. Izzo

art: Alex Schomburg



Mr. Izzo is 27; he lives in the seaport town of Rowayton CT with his wife, Cheryl. Although his work has appeared in Playboy, Time, House Beautiful, *and* Western Horseman, *the present story is his first sale. That, he hastens to explain, is because he's an advertising copywriter, and he's written ads for everything from baby bottles to scotch. He also skis, bicycles, and (obviously) plays electronic games; currently he's also working on what he hopes will be his second fiction sale.*

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Davis slammed the flipper and watched the steel ball go skittering up toward the 500 target.

"Go, baby!"

500 more points and it would be free game time.

The ball kissed the target, but lacked the strength to register on the scoreboard.

"Hell!"

It wobbled back down the slope, heading for the flipper again.

This time he tensed his body, ran through some unconscious calculations, and pushed the flipper hard, while lifting the underbelly of the machine with a practiced jerk.

"Tilt," sneered the box.

He looked away in disgust. In the arcade, he could hear the music of the pinball jockeys: bells and buzzers, whirs and clicks, thuds and springing noises.

He knew every machine in the place and had won on most.

As he walked up the aisle, which was covered with cigarette butts and soda stains, he passed his favorite machines. Reno Gambler. Rodeo Roundup. One-Eyed Joker. The quarters jingled in his jeans as he headed into the next aisle, where the new electronic machines were blinking.

"Transistorized rip-offs," he thought, contemptuously.

He could remember when they first came out. The Pong games and the Hockey games were first. Good for a few laughs. But you needed a partner to play, and there were few if any who could match Davis.

Then after the Pong games came the fancy electronics. Indy 500, where a computerized track weaved in and out, throwing obstacles at your speeding car. It took him five hours and 15 dollars to get that one down. Now he could drive it in his sleep.

Then there was Submarine. It had a periscope to sight enemy ships on a screen. The ships came at him at different speeds, so he was constantly forced to readjust his range. It took some judgement, but nothing too difficult.

He had it figured out in an hour.

It all led him to one conclusion: a computer hooked to a TV screen couldn't do what those simple steel pinballs could. It couldn't provide him with an infinitive variety of challenge. The electronics always had a pattern.

He simply couldn't understand what drew the people to the electronic screens. But they were there day after day in increasing numbers, plugged into the blip blip bleep of the cathode tubes.

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They were the suckers: the men in business suits out for a plug-in thrill. They'd drink their beer and have ridiculous contests. And not one of them could score a free game on the simplest pinball in the place.

Davis pulled alongside one man going into a hairpin turn at LeMans.

A dull explosion came from the speaker, as the man's car ran into a wall. He tried pathetically to wheel it around and three others cars struck him. He spun the wheel the other way and got hit again. His car was bouncing back and forth like a shooting-gallery duck.

"Give it the gas," muttered Davis.

"Pardon?"

"When you get hit like that, just give it the gas and hold the wheel straight until you get clear."

"Oh . . . yeah . . . thanks, kid," said the man, sliding another quarter into the slot, then quickly driving off an embankment, through a moat, and into an oncoming car.

Davis turned, annoyed, and kept walking, letting the continuous explosions from LeMans fade into the general noise of the arcade.

Whatever turns you on.

But for him, it was time to go back to Lady Luck. That pinball had been giving him a lot of trouble lately. It had a particularly treacherous combination of holes, targets, and bumpers that kept his senses spinning with every roll.

On his way back up the electronic alley, Davis noticed something new.

There was a booth with a seat and a screen. On the front it lacked the psychedelic paint of most of the games. No lights flashing. Simply painted dull green, with the word **Tank** printed in block letters on the entrance.

Fresh meat. A new game to master, then throw away to the uncultured palates of the amateurs.

He climbed into the booth, slightly nervous in anticipation of breaking in a brand new machine.

He looked for the directions. They weren't in sight. Neither was the coin slot. They were probably still setting this one up.

It looked a little different from the other electronic sets. With a small slit screen, similar to the kind on a real tank, it had a panel of control wheels and levers marked with elevation marks, and many other controls he had never seen on a game before.

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Davis ran his fingers over the seat. Leather, and quite worn for a new machine. There was a pungent odor in the booth, a kind of locker-room smell.

The controls looked sophisticated. He imagined that this game might turn out to be some fun, once they set it up.

Just as he was leaving to return to the pinballs, he noticed one of the control levers had some writing on it.

It said, "ON."

When he pulled it, the door to the booth closed. A light was activated above his head. A sign flashed, "FASTEN SEAT BELT."

Not bad.

Davis reached across the seat and pulled up a heavy leather strap across his waist. It tightened and firmly planted him in his seat.

Another light went on.

"PLACE HEAD GEAR."

Directly above his head there was a leather headpiece dangling from a wire.

Nice effects, he thought, putting on the head gear. The light flicked off, then another one came on. It was bright, piercing blue button that glowed with the word "START."

When he pushed it, three things happened: an engine started rumbling and shaking his seat, the screen lit up in full color *(color!)* and his booth started to move. Or at least it seemed to move.

Quickly he felt for gas and brake and found them in a comfortable spot on the floor. His hands went instinctively for the steering wheel. It was a bit like one of the old tanks he'd studied in basic training.

The rumbling in the booth increased as he pushed the gas pedal. Soon it was almost deafening.

On the screen, there was an open field, bouncing up and down to the movements of his booth.

OK, he thought, if they call this game **Tank** I should be seeing some tanks one of these days.

He was not disappointed. A thick green object appeared on his screen, from behind a break of trees.

It looked like a German Tiger, the kind used in World War II. Very realistic in detail. They probably picked up some war footage, then synchronized it to the game computer.

The Tiger was heading straight for him, sending puffs of blue smoke from its cannon.

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Not only could he see shells firing, he could hear them and feel their impact vibrations coming up from under his seat. His seat was shaking so much, he could hardly keep his hands on the wheel.

Blindly, he reached for the stick in front of him and jammed the button on top.

The force of what came next threw him deep into his seat. It was the recoil from his own cannon fire.

Through the screen he could see his shell break the ground, far to the left of the oncoming tank.

He flipped some levers, trying to adjust his range. When he fired again, his shell headed in the correct direction, but fell about fifty yards short. The explosion sent a hot wave into his booth.

By now, shells from the enemy tank were closing in on him. With his right hand, he spun his wheel in evasive moves. With his left hand, he readjusted his range, and fired his third shell.

The result was a tremendous explosion, followed by silence.

Mud and dirt were splattered on his screen, but in the clearing he could see the Tiger in flames in front of him. Black smoke poured from it and he noticed the thick smell of burning oil in his booth.

How does this thing keep score, he wondered, waiting for some points to register on his screen.

All he saw was the same burning carcass.

Davis was quite pleased with the result of his first encounter. The movements of the enemy tank appeared quite unprogrammed and unpredictable.

He turned his wheel slowly, scanning the field for signs of other tanks.

There were none. However there was a small troop of infantry, some carrying anti-tank weapons.

The hot button to his left looked good, so he fingered it and heard a flat rat-tat-tat. On his screen, half the infantry fell to the ground for cover, the other half fell in pieces. He gunned his motor and headed straight for them, losing them under his field of vision.

Somewhere far away he heard the unmistakable sound of a human scream, and felt a slight jostling under his seat.

Before he had a chance to reorient himself, another tank appeared on the screen. It was much larger than the first one, but seemed to have the same purpose in mind. By its look, it was one

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of the heavy tanks the Germans introduced late in the war. If this game followed history, his American tank was at a distinct disadvantage. He wasn't sure he liked playing a game with a handicap.

Before he could ponder much longer on this, a thunderous roar shook his booth, sending his head foward into the jutting controls.

Blood. There was blood on the controls, and a thin trail of it worming down from a gash over his eye.

Totally confused, Davis decided to run.

He spotted a dirt road into the woods and headed down it, feeling the hot breath of the enemy tank on his back.

He followed the road at full throttle, with the ground opening up around him from the attacking shells.

It was an incredibly rough ride. He had all he could do to keep his tank out of the trees.

Sooner or later he knew he would have to stop, turn and fight, or he would lose some points.

Up ahead there was a large farmhouse. His senses were slowly coming back after that last blast. Blood was caked on his hands and sweat poured down his front and back. The plan was this: he would duck behind the farmhouse, turn immediately, and face his enemy head on.

Another violent blast put an end to those plans. His entire booth rattled and let out a great grinding noise.

The scenery on his screen stood still.

He stomped on the gas, but it stayed still. Must have lost a tread, he thought. Turn and fight now, or lose this round.

His heart pounding in his ears, he threw his body behind the wheel that sent his turret moving. What he saw next was this: the barrel of the other tank, aimed dead center on his screen. Instantly he fired.

What took place next, he could not see. The first explosion knocked him unconscious. The second explosion was his shell catching his attacker in a vital spot, sending up a flash of burning fuel.

There was fire all around him when he regained consciousness. His head was bleeding again, his lungs burned from the hot smoke in his booth.

Davis grabbed for the seat belt, but it was jammed. The heat was becoming unbearable.

Suddenly he heard an odd scraping noise coming from over his head.

He looked up, his eyes tearing profusely from the smoke. The

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sound of metal giving way rang through his ears, and sunlight burned through a momentary hole over his head.

Something fell in, then the crack of sunlight was shut off.

He recognized it and was instantly sick.

Grenade.

He was clawing frantically at the seat straps when it went off with a dull thud.

There was no explosion. No impact. No flash. Just a single piece of cardboard issued from the metal casing of the grenade.

And it said, neatly printed in block letters,

"GAME OVER."

MASS ME ANOTHER QUESTION

by Alan J. Warren

The author lives in Alameda CA, which is an island sort of on one side of San Francisco Bay. This is his first sale.

The basic facts are simple enough:

By 2091 it was possible to forge a duplicate of any starship from a single sheet of the original ship's metal exterior. This applied to the large ships as well as the small, even one as big as the *Ranger,* an interstellar explorer ship. Similar operations, involving the creation of duplicate human beings from a single cell of another human being, had of course been common practice since 1978, when the first such instance was recorded.

And on the morning when the huge duplicate of the starship in question sped through the heavens, Gromml Deetrius's telescanner began to glow brightly, indicating that a huge mass of matter had gone by at faster-than-light speed.

Alarmed, Deetrius turned to his cooler-headed assistant, Pygaart, and asked him, "What *was* that mysterious mass, man?"

Pygaart, always the model of serenity, answered quietly. "That was no ordinary mass, man. That was the clone, *Ranger*."

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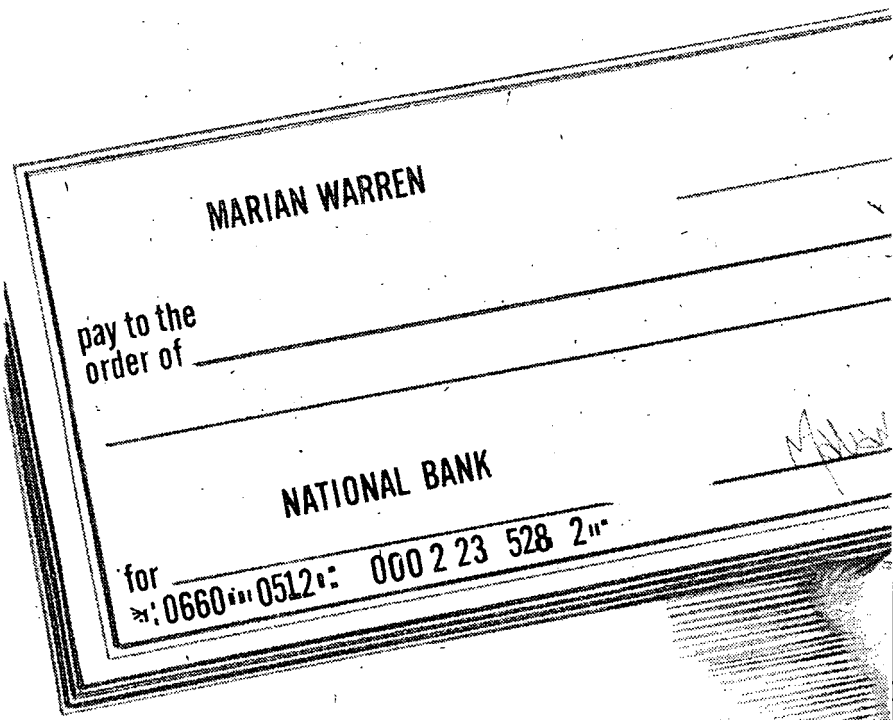

SOMEONE ELSE'S HOUSE

by Lee Chisholm

art: Val Lakey

Mrs. Chisholm is Canadian-born, married, and now living in the beautiful Monterey area of California. She broke into print in the late '60s in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine. *She's since sold to* Cavalier *and* Cat Fancy. *(She's a cat person, obviously.) This is her first sale to an SF magazine, but some of her recent sales to* AHMM *have included strange touches.*

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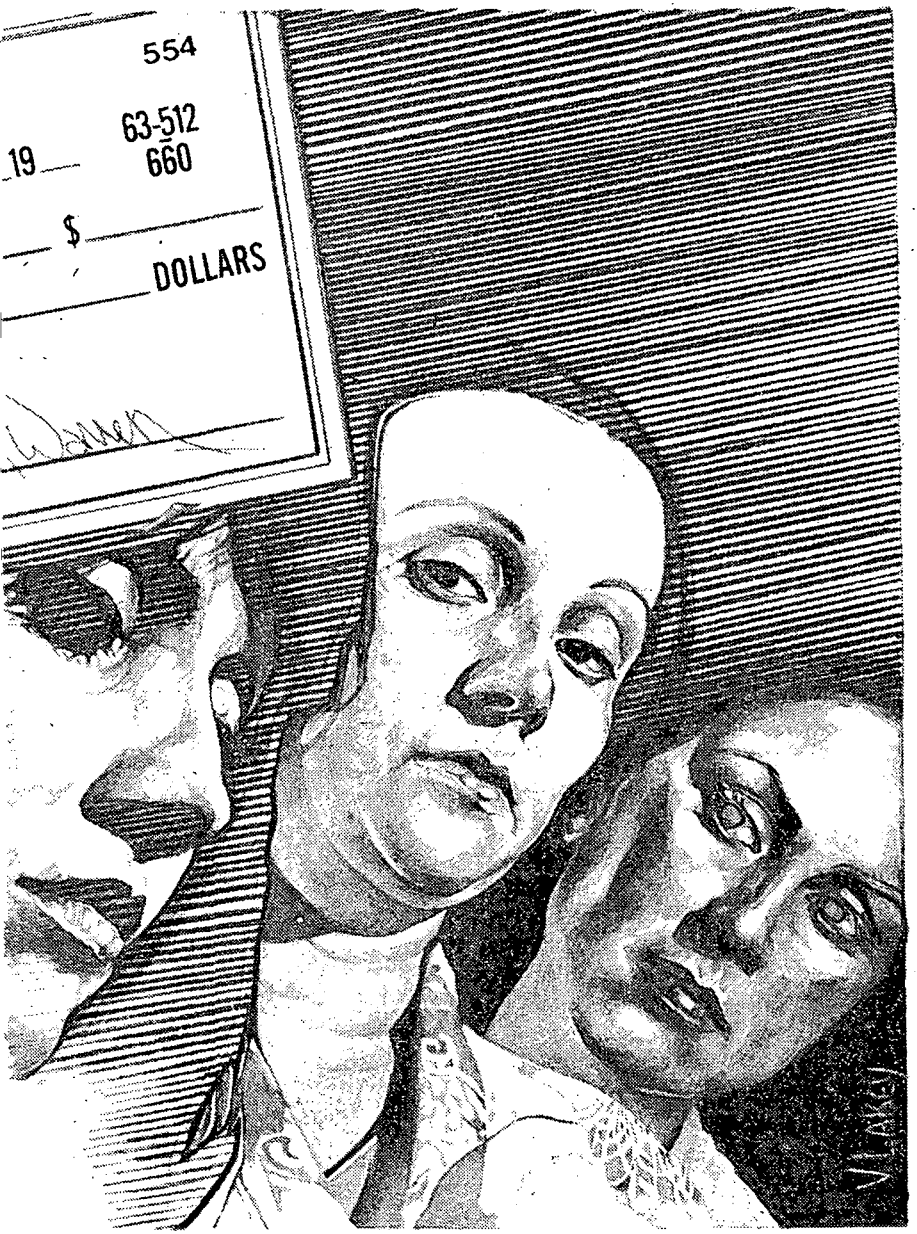

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"How are you, Marian?"

The face hanging above her own assumed shape, dark mists clearing to reveal cold, gray eyes and a neat mustache centered exactly above a thin upper lip; with nose, cheekbones, and forehead cast in neat, middle-aged symmetry topped by iron-gray hair, stiff and short as iron filings. There was a coldness and remoteness about the face that had nothing to do with her emerging consciousness.

"Well, Marian?"

Impatience was there too, barely disguised by the show of concern. Obviously she was being a drain and a burden again, just as she had always been. First to her parents who had wanted a boy as their firstborn, not a sickly girl-child, and then later to her sister Viola, with whom she roomed. Viola and her husband Henry needed the room rent, while barely tolerating her physical presence.

She could get out; she knew that. But it was the headaches that frightened her. At least Viola understood; got her to bed and called the doctor. Got her the shot that killed the pain. Obviously she was just coming out of one of those shots now. She didn't know the doctor. He must be new.

"Can you hear me, Marian?" he repeated impatiently.

"Who," she asked, her mouth dry and cottony, "is Marian?"

"You," he replied, "are Marian."

"Oh, no I'm not. I'm . . ." She heard her voice stop and hang there. She was— Who was she? My God, her own name! Gone! It was funny, of course. Later on she would tell . . . Surely there was someone she could tell, some friend at the library where she worked. She struggled for the image of a friend, some familiar face among the stacks of books, wall-to-wall and floor-to-floor ceiling, that had been her life. But no image came. Just the books themselves—dry, lifeless; all the wisdom, passion and dreams of the world reduced to symbols on the printed pages. She knew then that she had no friend, just the books. And the books were cold. . . .

"My name is not Marian," she insisted again.

"I was afraid of this," the doctor said, turning to two people who came slowly into focus behind him. A young man and a woman. "It's the new drug. Being used with great success now for migraines, but it affects the memory center of the brain."

"For how long, doctor?" the woman asked. She was in her forties, blonde, chic, and carefully made-up. The young man at her

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side, in a navy blazer with a longish haircut, seemed barely out of his teens. But they were obviously related. The shape of the faces was the same, sharp with high cheekbones and slanted, almost Slavic eyes.

She gazed up at them with interest. It went without saying that they were Rich with a capital **R**, something she herself had never been. But she recognized it when she saw it. The good clothes, the haughty air, the boredom that sufficiency can bring.

"Maybe a day, maybe a week. Depends upon the metabolism of the subj— er, patient. She could throw it off with another few hours sleep. It's hard to say."

"But the drug *was* worth trying, doctor. I've never seen my sister in so much pain."

"It was one of her worst, yes," the doctor agreed dryly.

She listened, intrigued. It was a dream, of course. These people, the "doctor", even the room. Her eyes roamed around the darkened interior; rich mahogany furnishings from another era, all stiffly feminine. A woman's room. Floral wallpaper, heavy drapes and the four-poster bed in which she lay. She wouldn't be surprised to see a canopy appear overhead. Anything could happen in dreams.

But no canopy materialized. Instead, the three faces remained hanging above her own. She closed her eyes. Visions and dreams, distortions of time and space were no strangers to her. She'd had migraines since childhood, and in her sufferings, altered by the half-light world of drugs, she had seen many things. Devils and demons, distended furniture, upside-down rooms. She would sleep and the dream would pass. It always did.

But it didn't. When she awoke again the bed was the same with the four posters spiraling upward. The floral wallpaper remained, immutably imprinted with fat cabbage roses, and the room was still battened down by the heavy furnishings. Only now a grim-faced nurse, middle-aged and white-capped, with the visage of a minor bulldog, stood above the bed.

"Are you awake, Miss Warren?" asked the bulldog.

She'd experienced this before too. The continuance of dreams. One awoke, floundered to the bathroom surrounded by a miasma of pain, then came back, fell into bed and resumed the dream. However strange or grotesque, the dream simply waited for the dreamer to pick up the threads. She closed her eyes. She would sleep the bulldog away.

But the bulldog stayed. "Miss Warren," she repeated in a voice

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flat with professionalism, "the doctor thinks you should get up now. Just for a little while. Start to get your bearings again."

"I don't want to get up, and I'm not Miss Warren!"

The nurse's opaque brown eyes showed a flicker of interest, as though she'd been told to expect this denial of identity. Her expression said, "Here it comes!"

"I want to see my sister, Viola," she said pettishly. At least that was one name she could remember.

"There's no person by that name here," the nurse said. "Your sister Mrs. Palmer's first name is Grace. *Grace,*" she repeated, as though to write the word indelibly on this slow patient's brain.

Grace! It was laughable. Viola had always looked like a Viola. Dark-eyed and dark-skinned with curly black hair. The exact opposite of herself really, with her drab blonde hair and fair skin that refused to tan.

"My sister's name is Viola," she said with dignity, then added, "Where am I? In some kind of nursing home? Was I that bad?"

"You are in your own home, Miss Warren."

"My own home?" She glanced around distractedly at the heavy, ornate room. "This is not my home; not my room. This is somebody else's house."

But the nurse was equal to the situation. Undoubtedly she'd been chosen for just that reason.

"It may seem strange now. You've been under very heavy medication. Disorientation's not unusual, but you'll find that little by little, the room and your surroundings will look familiar again. Now ups-a-daisy." The nurse got one strong arm between pillow and shoulders and hoisted. Then, reaching under the sheets, she dragged the reluctant legs forward. "There now, isn't that better?"

She sat on the edge of the bed; the room swam. When it cleared she found herself staring down at her own lank limbs. "Too tall and skinny," her mother used to say. Viola was the cute one. But afterwards, in later years barely out of her teens, Viola went to fat, whereas she had stayed gaunt. But gaunt was "in" by then. A model's figure, some friends said enviously, but she had never made the most of it. Heavy, dark stockings and plain skirts and sweaters had been her standard fare. It had been fixed in her mind that she wasn't "cute." The world's opinion, kinder and grander, mattered little. . . .

Could it be that she wasn't in a nursing home at all, but an asylum? Could the pain of the last headache have driven her crazy? She wouldn't put it past Viola and Henry to stick her in an

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asylum. Anything to get rid of her.

"We'll go to the bathroom now, Miss Warren." The nurse helped her up. The floor swayed. She felt wobbly, but she was prodded forward to a door at the far side of the room which opened to reveal a baroque bathroom in imitation marble. The towels hung in thirsty richness, deep blue and thick as rugs, and in one corner a luxurious, white shower robe waited to accommodate its owner. This, most surely, was not hers! She wondered again when the dream would end.

The toilet flushed (the bodily functions were certainly real), and the nurse reappeared.

"How about a tub, Miss Warren?"

Miss Warren this, Miss Warren that. Was it possible that she *was* Miss Warren? Some new person in a new house, undertaking a new life? She leaned over the sink and looked into the mirror; same thin face, skin gray from weakness, eyes cloudy with drugs. But undoubtedly herself.

"Yes, she said. "Perhaps a warm tub. . . ." She had heard people talk like that in movies. Joan Crawford looking lofty in padded shoulders, or Myrna Loy, rich and pampered. A tub always seemed to improve things for people who had houses like this and bathrooms to themselves. There was no Henry here to knock on the door and tell her to hurry it up, or Viola to wail about the hot water running out. "Yes, perhaps a tub . . ." she murmured, and was helped back to her bed to await the filling of same.

She was sitting on the side of the bed trying to sort out her thoughts when the door burst open and the young man who had hung over her earlier, bounded in; a combination of high spirits and youthful fashion in a melon shirt and gray slacks.

"Hello, Auntie dear!" he said blithely, bending to kiss her on the cheek—the air-light landing of a butterfly. She drew back, startled.

He laughed, showing fine white teeth in the thin, narrow face. His brilliant blue eyes creased to Oriental slits above the high cheekbones. A strange face. Interesting. Different. And one aware of its power to charm.

"You know," she said sternly, "that I am not your aunt."

"Since when?" he teased.

"Since never at all."

"Wishing me away won't work," he said plopping himself down beside her. "I'm your nephew. You're stuck with me. Look, Auntie . . ." The young man prepared to look serious. "I know your

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headaches are bad, but this last one was a complete wipe-out. Dr. Martin, your fancy medic, had to resort to some kind of miracle drug. Do you know you were out for three days?"

Three days! Seventy-two hours! Somewhere in there she had lost her identity and obviously gained a nephew.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Auntie, are you asking *my name*?" He looked stricken. "Little Huey, whom you adored from the moment I was born, and spoiled silly for the next nineteen and three-quarter years?"

"Did I really?" *Wouldn't it be nice if I had?* she thought. If someone could hand her a dream come true, this would be it. Herself a wealthy matron of obviously unlimited means with a favorite nephew to indulge and love.

"What's your last name, Huey?" she asked.

Huey made a small exploding sound with his mouth. "Auntie, you can't mean it! My last name? Crompton, of course. Huey David Crompton, the Third."

"Your mother, I take it, is supposedly my sister, Grace?"

"You're getting good, Auntie. Only Mother's last name isn't Crompton anymore. After Father died, Mother married Mr. Jarrett, very cold, very correct. Then she married Mr. Van Ness, not cold, not correct at all. Then she married Mr. Palmer. None of her choices were wise, but he was the worst. His skin was walnut-colored and he sang calypso in nightclubs. He managed to drain off what was left of her personal fortune. So, money gone, she came home to you. As for me, I've been here all along, except for school. I was 'inconvenient', you see, for Mother and the parade of new husbands. Besides, you wanted me to yourself, didn't you, Auntie?"

He gave her a hug, encircling her thin shoulders with his strong, young arm. She drew away slightly, some habit from her cold, prim past, but it really was a pleasant sensation to be somebody's warmly loved aunt. Even if she wasn't . . .

"Miss Warren's bath is ready." The nurse made a granite-faced reappearance.

"Go get cleaned up, Auntie," said Huey boyishly. "Then why don't you come downstairs for cocktails? It's only . . ." he studied his expensive wristwatch, "ten past four. The sun's over the yardarm and all that. You do feel okay, don't you?"

"Yes," she said. "I feel fine. Weak but fine."

"Good-o. Nursie here can bring you downstairs and keep an eye on you."

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The nurse nodded her unsmiling assent.

She allowed herself to be helped down the broad staircase, knowing it was a game of "let's pretend" they were all playing. Not the nurse perhaps, who seemed sincere in her role, but the rest of them, herself included. The only problem was, the game was so much fun! For the first time in her life she felt her real self emerging from some bleak, half-remembered shell.

Her dress was a tomato-colored print with an electric blue bodice and matching blue cuffs. On the hanger in the bedroom closet, yawning with department-store munificence, it had looked too young, too blatant. But the nurse had reached for it unerringly, insisting that she "slip it on." The effect of it slithering over her slim figure had been almost sensual, and once zipped up, the effect of its mellow color next to her pale skin was simply magical. It lent life, even radiance to her face.

The nurse had sprayed her straggly hair with dry shampoo and pulled the clean strands back from her face. A touch of tomato-colored lipstick completed the picture. She was sure she had never looked so good in her whole forgotten life.

At the bottom of the stairs Huey enfolded her in strong arms.

"Auntie, you look sensational! Wait till Franklin sees you."

"Franklin?"

"Oh come now, don't tell me you've forgotten Franklin, your faithful old butler? We had to keep him away from your bedside; you know how he likes to hover! So we sent him to the city for a small holiday. He thought you were dying, Auntie."

She wondered if the real Marian Warren were indeed dead and she had been brought in to take her place. She'd read of such things in mystery novels. Of course, it would be hard to fool the butler.

Grace was there; the sleek, slant-eyed blonde who was Huey's mother. She wore a floor-length dress of cream-colored silk that swirled softly about her lovely figure like the shimmer of a waterfall.

"Marian darling," she purred, drifting forward; the handsome library behind her a mere stage setting for her elegance. "You're up!"

"I'm up," she acknowledged, "but I'm not 'Marian darling,' as you know, of course."

"Well, if you say so, dear." Grace took her elbow and helped her to a damask-covered wing chair beside the fireplace.

"There dear, your favorite chair. And Huey has made a dry Rob

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Roy for you."

"Right here, Auntie. On the rocks."

Huey brandished an amber-colored drink. Out of curiosity she sampled it and found it delicious, but potent. She recognized the taste of good Scotch. They always served Scotch at Christmas parties in the library. The other ingredient mystified her. But she liked it.

"Very good, Huey," she murmured.

"I imagine you would like a small sherry, Nurse," Grace said to a nurse, who had tried to make herself inconspicuous in a deep chair in a corner of the room.

The nurse nodded her acceptance. "Dry, if you please," she said sedately.

How awful to be in service like the nurse. To be accepting "suggestions" in somebody else's house. She knew. She had been doing it all her life. First in her parents' home until they both died. She was fuzzy on the details, but she knew they were dead. Then her sister Viola's house. And always, she had been the lonely hanger-on. The unwanted. Until now, when by some marvelous and obviously illegal set of circumstances, people bowed and deferred to her. And, however long it lasted, she was going to enjoy it to the full. Even if the dénouement was death. After all, she reasoned, she had been brought onto the scene for a purpose. That purpose accomplished, she would be removed. Or, at least, they would try.

"We have a surprise for you, Marian darling," Grace said, all catlike charm. "Bill Darrick said he might stop by this evening for cocktails."

"How interesting," she heard herself say. "Especially when I don't know who Bill Darrick is."

"That's what comes of being rich, Auntie love," said Huey with a chuckle. "You can conveniently forget your high-priced lawyer."

"My lawyer; hmm. . . ." She studied Grace through narrowed eyes. Unless Bill Darrick turned out to be ninety and doddering, she could pretty well guess whose lawyer he was—by inclination if not by retainer. Well, another piece of the fresco was daubed-in. She would wait and see.

The doorbell chimed in the distance. No lowbrow scurry to answer the door here. Grace, Huey, and herself, and even the nurse, continued sipping like gods on Olympus.

In a few moments the library door was silently opened and an old butler stood in the doorway, his chest sunk-

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en, his waistline rounded. But his face was beautiful. An aquiline nose, pinched with old age, preserved its authority beneath gray eyes sunken into seas of flesh. His head was bald, but the angle noble. She could see he was but a memory of his former grand self, doubtless resisting retirement, obscurity, and the grave.

"Madam," he said, "Mr. William Darrick, solicitor, has come to call."

"Very good, Franklin." Grace's voice was a blend of honey and cream. "Show him in."

Franklin looked towards her chair, his blurred eyes focussing on the warm, tomato-colored presence. He obviously assumed her to be Marian Warren.

"Madam . . ." He stepped forward, his voice cracking.

"How are you, Franklin?" she said graciously. "It's only fair to tell you that I'm not Marian Warren. Maybe a stand-in who looks like her; my memory is very clouded. However, I've heard of your devotion, and I wish to commend you for it. It's a very lucky mistress who has such a butler."

"Thank you, madam," said Franklin. Eyebrows were raised all around, but not in horror. She was obviously being very much Marian Warren. Befuddled, befogged, forgetful, but every inch a great lady. And it was a source of considerable pride to have filled the role so nicely. After all, she was just a librarian. From what library, city, place or time in the world, she could not remember. However, a librarian she was. But she was not Marian Warren.

"Well, Marian. Finally dragged yourself out of bed, I see." The voice speaking from the doorway was deep and joyful—a voice designed to sway juries, woo ladies, and have its own way.

Bill Darrick came towards her, hands outstretched, a handsome, fortyish man with a deep tan, a white-toothed smile, and dark eyes limpid as a Venetian lover's.

"Are you by any chance Italian?" Marian Warren, rich eccentric, could say any mad thing that popped into her head.

He stopped, amazed, then recovered himself. "Why, I thought you knew that, Marian. I was born in Italy, but raised in this country by my aunt. The war years, you know. Later she legally adopted me, so I took the name 'Darrick'—which, of course, is an English name."

Well, you aren't fooling anyone, she wanted to say, but for the sake of good manners she let it go. He was in on the plot; she knew that. He came right up to her and got a good look at her

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pale face—similiar to Marian Warren's, she was sure, or else she would not be here, but not Marian Warren. And he was not half-blind like old Franklin, or a newcomer like the nurse.

"I suppose you have my power-of-attorney?" She enjoyed seeing his dark Italian skin go pale.

"I believe that is also a matter of record," he said stiffly, some of his buoyancy falling away.

"For how long?"

"For eighteen months now, ever since your headaches got so bad. You checked into the Clinic for six weeks, if you remember, then a month at the Faith Healing Center, then two months in Spain on the theory that it might be your sinuses—"

"Never mind all that," she said.

"I'm merely pointing out, my dear Marian, that bills had to be paid in your absence and this entire estate had to be kept up, plus—"

"An allowance for Huey, and doubtless ample funds for Grace."

"Well, yes." He looked at her askance, then shot a questioning glance at Grace, who seemed to have turned into a human statue, a drink halfway to her mouth. Even Huey had temporarily forgotten his role of charming boy nephew.

"I understand perfectly," she went on, "but none of that will be necessary now. I'm feeling quite my old self again. In fact, much better!" She chuckled inwardly. Her old self, she was sure, had never had so much fun.

"I will be at home from now on, my dear Mr. Darrick. And quite able to carry on my affairs. So first thing tomorrow morning please appear here with the papers drawn up to relinquish your power-of-attorney. My nurse here, Miss . . . er?"

"Finney," the nurse supplied.

"Miss Finney," she continued, "and Franklin, my beloved butler, will be the witnesses."

Franklin, who had been making a slow circle of the room, nearsightedly checking glasses and bottles, bowed formally.

"Very good, Madam," he said.

"Let's make it 10 o'clock then," she said with an authority that brooked no resistance. "Unless I happen to be dead tomorrow morning of so-called natural causes. In that case, call in the police because I have no intention of dying during the night. Do you understand, Franklin?"

"Yes, Madam," said Franklin, backing out of the room. The deadness of routine and old age were gone from his features. He'd

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been told something and he knew it. The Mistress must live, and if she died, he would know what to do.

"And you, Nurse?"

"Very good, Miss Warren." The nurse looked at her with new respect.

"How about another drink?" Huey said brightly into the silence.

"I think I will," she replied. "These Rob Roys are terribly good."

The nurse helped her back upstairs and she went gratefully to bed, weak but happy. Someone, she realized, had chosen her to stand in for the missing, probably dead, Marian Warren. Someone with a supreme knowledge of practical psychology had matched her up. But little did they know how well. All her life she'd waited for something like this—an opportunity to be Someone. She'd always wanted it. The knowledge stirred like a live thing in the gray ashes of her half-forgotten self. And now she had it! The new Marian Warren would not be so easily displaced as the old.

She accepted her dinner on a tray with the élan of someone to the manner born and with the trust of a small babe. They wouldn't dare make a move against her tonight. Propped up in bed, she nibbled toast and chewed steak cut up into baby squares and drenched in milky gravy (the cook would have to go). She smiled reflectively. The morning meeting with Bill Darrick should prove interesting.

The nurse helped her downstairs at five till ten. Although she felt much stronger, she needed the moral support. The nurse was now definitely on Her Side; only one person could sway her, and rounding the bend in the stairs, she saw he had arrived. Dr. Martin was just handing his hat to Franklin.

"How much do you make a year?" she murmured in the nurse's ear.

The nurse looked startled. "That depends. I'm a private duty nurse. Fourteen thousand in a good year."

"How much in a bad?" She fixed the woman with an autocratic stare.

"Well . . . " The nurse floundered. "Nine thousand, maybe ten."

"I'll give you fifteen thousand a year straight salary to stay on with me as secretary-companion. All the time off you need. Travel allowance for foreign lands,"

"Wha—at?" the nurse looked stunned.

"All you have to say is 'yes' and you pass into my direct employ as of this moment. You can consider your responsibility to Dr. Martin and the others ended. I'm perfectly well anyway, as you

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can see. There's nothing left but to dismiss you. However, as my secretary-companion, you can consider yourself employed indefinitely."

"I . . ." The nurse reached for an answer.

"Just say 'yes' or 'no'."

"Yes, Miss Warren." The nurse was a trifle breathless.

"Good. Then we know where we stand." She smiled, satisfied.

They were all assembled in the library; the same grouping as the night before with the addition of the doctor. He sprang up as she entered.

"Marian, you shouldn't be up and around so soon, especially when the drugs had such a powerful effect on you."

"Yes," she agreed with heavy humor while being helped to "her" chair, "they made me into a *new* woman."

"That isn't what I meant. Nurse, you should have let me know. . . ."

"I saw no reason to contact you, Doctor." The nurse was obviously offended. "Miss Warren reacted exactly as you said she would: a little forgetful at first, perhaps a bit disoriented. But when she rallied so quickly last evening, remembering who she was and joining the family for drinks, I thought you would be pleased."

"It's quite unfair to jump on Nurse Finney," she said, raising an imperious hand (as she was sure the real Marian Warren would do). "She followed orders exactly, and since I'm now quite well, I've dismissed her as my nurse and hired her as my secretary. So you see, Doctor, her allegiance to you is now at an end."

"But this is outrageous! A sick woman dismissing nurses, trying to call her own tune!"

"I am not sick. I am Marian Warren, surrounded by my beloved family in my beautiful ancestral home. All is as it should be. Besides, this meeting was to be betweeen my lawyer and myself; I can't imagine what the *rest* of you are doing here. . . ."

Bill Darrick rose with white-toothed aplomb.

"Of course, of course. This is a business meeting like any other. A little unusual perhaps, due to Marian's rapid recovery, but nothing to, uh, fear. Why don't you all, er . . ."

"Clear out," she supplied.

"Right. Clear out. We'll call you if we need you. You too, Franklin. And Miss Finney."

"Franklin and Miss Finney are to be my witnesses."

"Yes, yes . . . when we need them." She could almost see him

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rolling up his mental sleeves.

As the door closed behind the others, Bill sat down opposite her, briefcase on his knee.

"Well now, Marian . . ."

"No need for a long discussion," she cut in. "I merely want to sever your power-of-attorney. So if you would be good enough to give me the papers . . ."

"You propose to sign your own checks?"

"Certainly."

He considered this, obviously framing a reply.

"You realize," he said finally, "that your signature and the old Marian Warren's signature would not compare."

"Why not?"

"Because you're not Marian Warren."

"Really? Since when?"

"Since always, which I'm sure you realized as soon as you got your wits about you. Unfortunately, we had to take you on a Quick Eradication basis. Nothing of your old life was to remain. After thirty-six hours of constant Computer Erasure and Supplant Input, you were supposed to be a different person with different memories, notions and opinions. In about one percent of the cases it doesn't work, due to the mental tenacity of the . . . er, subject. It wasn't expected of you, a somewhat pallid, fortyish librarian living in a fantasy world of books and dreams. However, in coloring, manner, size, and general appearance, you were almost a double for Marian Warren."

"The *late* Marian Warren, I presume."

"Yes, sad to say. She died of a brain tumor. One of her 'headaches.' The one real doctor she consulted didn't spot it. The other medical quacks and faith healers simply wished it away. 'Pray yourself well' was their theme."

"So you say. She could be dead of a bullet in the brain."

"That is also true." Darrick shifted his briefcase. "However, be that as it may, the dear woman is gone without a trace, and you are here, quite ostensibly she. You've been accepted by the help. . . ."

"Such as they are," she intoned, "half-blind and brand new."

"But accepted, nevertheless."

"So Marian Warren alive is worth more to you than Marian Warren dead?"

"Yes."

"Either you're covering up a murder, or the Will cuts Grace off

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without a cent and leaves young Huey dangling at the end of a trust allowance."

"You're shrewd," he said. "It could be a little of each, or a bit of all. However, you need only cooperate to get your share. Go on being Marian Warren and you'll have all the luxury to which you've been, ah—unaccustomed. Clothes, a generous allowance . . ."

"Through your largesse, of course."

"Of course."

"And in the meantime, I take it, the estate will be given a more equitable division, so that when I do 'pass on' the Will will be practically a toothless document. With your power-of-attorney, certain large sums will be safely invested for Grace and generous gifts made to Huey—not to mention special rewards to yourself and the good Doctor Martin."

"Something of the sort, yes." He grinned and she saw the malice behind the charm.

"So you need me," she said.

"Yes, we need you. For the moment. A long moment. These things cannot be done in a day. It takes time. Nor do we have any wish to involve ourselves in your untimely demise. Staying within certain reasonable guidelines, you can expect to live out your life as Marian Warren."

"I see." And she did. "Then I think cooperation is the order of the day. You keep the power-of-attorney and I stay very much alive with Nurse Finney as my secretary-companion."

"If those are your terms," he said agreeably.

"There's one more thing," she said. "How did I get here?"

He considered her intently, his dark eyes thoughtful. "Since we're going into business together, I see no reason for not telling you. Or at least, giving you an outline. Do you remember your name?"

"No," she answered truthfully.

"Or where you were born?"

"No."

"Or where you were living?"

"No."

"But you do remember some things?"

"Yes. I was a librarian. I had a sister named Viola. Viola was married to a lowbrow named Henry."

Bill Darrick smiled indulgently. "You are, then, a woman without a past, except for such past as we choose to give you. You

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came to us through an organization known as the PRS, or People Replacement Service. There's one in every major city, both here and abroad. They go by various names and guises, of course, but they are all linked to the World Bank Computer System.

"Say a girl wants to meet a personable young man. She goes to a dating service. On her computer reference card she puts down the most intimate information; but to her it's nothing—merely facts. Her age, weight, coloring, size. Her education, her preferences in food, clothes, men. Place of birth, languages, little defects like 'wear glasses to read' or 'leg once broken in skiing accident'. Hopefully, she'll be put in touch with some willing male who also likes to ski. So much for the girl. Maybe she will find true love at the end of a computer printout, maybe not. Regardless, she has paid a handsome fee and stripped herself bare. All the information goes into the World Computer Bank."

"But I haven't been to a dating service. Nor would I ever lower myself to such a degree."

"No, you haven't, but your sister and brother-in-law have. Only they answered the practical come-on of a 'Renters Exchange': *Can't stand Uncle Irwin, but rent him the spare room? Small fee to exchange him for more compatible roomer. Our listings guarantee top exchange. Bring photo and Unc's pref's. We do the rest.*"

"So they exchanged me?" She wasn't really surprised. No matter how low Viola and Henry sank, their depths had yet to be plumbed. "But how?"

"They merely waited until one of your 'headaches' struck, then had you removed to a kind of nursing-home boarding-house within commuting distance of your job. Meanwhile, they rented your room." He smiled sardonically.

"And my job?"

"When one is dead, one no longer needs a job."

"You mean?"

He nodded.

"But whom did they bury?"

"Guess," he said with a pleased grin.

"My God!"

"Yes, it worked out remarkably well. But that's not always the case. Sometimes the replaced people just wander away; amnesia, they call that. Or sometimes they meet with unfortunate accidents and have to be buried in potter's field. But you, my dear Marian, are alive and well, and getting the best of the bargain. What d'you think?" He ran the words together in a most un-

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lawyer-like fashion.

"I suppose you're right," she agreed, "except that I have a lawyer who has my power-of-attorney and who may dispose of me at any time."

"But won't."

"But won't," she repeated. "But what if you were to get amnesia, or be hit by a truck? What then?"

"Then a very sick Marian Warren will have to practice a very sick, shaky forgery of the real signature and try to carry on."

"I see."

"But," he assured her, "I have no intention of wandering off *sans* memory into the fog, or doing battle with a truck."

"I quite understand," she said sedately.

"Then I believe we understand each other." He collected his briefcase and rose. "I will tell the others that things will continue as planned and advise your two faithful retainers, Franklin and Nurse Finney, that no witnesses will be necessary today."

"Yes." She tried to give the appearance of dutifully accepting the inevitable.

Only Nurse Finney came to check on her.

"I've changed my mind about revoking Mr. Darrick's power-of-attorney, at least for the present. Right now, I'd like a good strong cup of tea and a copy of today's paper."

She looked at the paper's masthead with interest; she'd never seen it before. She was not only in a different city, she decided, but a different country.

When tea arrived she was deep in the Want Ads.

"Thank you, Franklin. I appreciate your standing by today. I'm holding off for awhile, but I may need your witnessing signature in other matters, very soon."

"Very good, Madam."

Ah-hah! There it was, under the Business Personals. Disguised, but there could be no doubt about the organization behind it.

> A-1 Theatrical Service: Ashamed to introduce Cousin Charlie to society? His manners atrocious and accent all wrong? Contact us for a stand-in. Bring photo. We do the rest.

She picked up the desk phone and dialed. After a number of preliminaries she was put through to a voice-in-charge.

"I have a relative," she said, "a cousin, Italian born, but using

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an English name, who doesn't quite fit in. I would like to have him replaced. Just for a very important social event, of course. And I thought if I could also arrange a little vacation for him at the same time . . ."

The voice murmured assuringly. It so happened they were associated with a travel bureau.

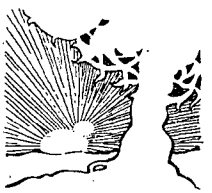
"Of course, if he wanted to stay on vacation indefinitely, I would have no objections."

The voice murmured further assent.

"As for the fee . . ." She paused meaningfully. "I could make a large deposit, but I wouldn't be able to pay in full until, well, until *after* my . . . er, cousin had been replaced."

The voice asked a question.

"Yes, indeed," she replied. "You were recommended by someone who has used your services. Very, very highly recommended . . . "



ANSWER TO PINK, BLUE, AND GREEN (from page 47)

Eighty pink arms mean 40 pinks, and half as many blue arms mean 20 blues. Thus there are 60 pinks and blues. Subtracting 60 from 81 gives 21 as the number of eyes on the greens.

21 can be factored in just two ways: 1×21, and 3×7. We were told, however, that there are more than 3 greens and less than 12, therefore there must be 7 greens, each with three eyes. All three races have a third eye located centrally just above the nose.

Now for a second problem. Turn back, reread the dialog, and identify each professor's skin color. (Turn to page 94 for the solution.)

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AHEAD OF THE JONESES

by Al Sarrantonio

Mr. Sarrantonio is a 26-year-old assistant to the editor at a large and well-respected publishing house in New York City. He's a graduate of the Clarion Science Fiction Writers' Workshop (1974). He and his wife Beth live in the North Bronx and are reasonably well-treated by their two cats. This is his first sale.

January 12

Today I'm a happy man, because the deliverymen installed my new abstract lawn sculpture. I had it set up on the property line, and I could swear that Harry Jones's eyes bugged out when he saw it facing his front porch. The bastard'll have to look at it every day as he leaves for work.

January 30

When Jones called me over to see his new lawn sculpture today I had to hold myself back from strangling him in front of it. It's a silver-plated job, twice the size of mine and with twice as many artsy features. And on top of the fact that he had the nerve to *buy* the thing, the son-of-a-bitch had it mounted on his side of the property line, looming over my lawn sculpture. I put on an appreciative grin as he showed it to me, but we both knew what I was thinking. . . .

February 16

Today I called one of Harry's kids over to take a picture of him and his friends with my brand new holo-camera. Gave little Robby an instant print (gave each of his friends one too!) and I just know the kid ran home to show Harry and ask how come they don't have a holo-camera. I could just visualize Harry yelling at the little lout and telling him to shut his mouth about holo-cameras. Made me feel warm inside all day.

February 21

Harry called this afternoon to tell me about the great buy he got on a holo-moviecamera and to invite Sheila and me and the kids over to help them make their first full-length film. Of course I

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told him we couldn't make it, but the bastard had little Robby run over later with a print. An hour's worth of color film, with sound—self-projecting cartridge, too. Just need an empty space to project it in. I projected it into the garbage, of course; it burns hell out of me that a jerk like that who can't be making any more money than me could afford something like that. Of course there have been a lot of sales on holo-moviecameras lately, and the prices have come down a bit. It's the fact that he just has to do me one better that makes me feel so rotten. . . .

June 17

Eat your heart out, Harry Jones! The workmen turned on the juice today and left, and I must admit they did quite a job. There can't be anyone in the whole county, never mind this block, with a complete amusement arcade like mine in his backyard. And I mean *complete*. Everything from high-reality-level ride simulators to holographic clowns (4-color, yet!) to a changeable-program fireworks grid to close out the evening light spectacle. The guy at the department store started to give me his whole spiel about how I was getting in on the ground floor of a new revolution in home entertainment and how the prices would never be this low again (I don't see how they could get much higher; luckily, I did have a few dollars put away for my kids' college educations) but I didn't let him finish, I just signed the contract and slapped down the advance payment. He threw in the rifle range, no charge, but if he hadn't I would have ordered one anyway. I *know* how much Harry likes to target shoot on weekends.

June 28

God help me, and I'm a religious man, but I almost went over and murdered him today. I'm calmer now, but the initial shock of coming home from a short business trip to find the finishing touches being put to Jones's outdoor 3-D theater, set on top of his domed vapor-pool, and all of that resting on top of his automated midget racer track and micro golf course (combined with a good-sized arcade and target-shoot in one corner, floating six feet above the ground) was just a bit much. After a couple of hours I stopped trembling. I thought I could cheer myself up tonight by programming a light show, but Jone's heat-lightning extravaganza left the blinking lights in my backyard about a thousand feet below.

I'm desperate.

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November 11

Every last penny I've got is gone; Sheila's run away with the kids—but none of that matters. After five months I've finally found a research assistant in one of the large consumer appliance companies who could be bought, and I *know*—I'm *positive*, because I checked everything out thoroughly—that what I now hold in my hands is absolutely the only one (and therefore the best!) of its kind in the world. The guy I bribed (he wouldn't even tell me his name, the weasel—he looked like he needed the money, though) said this thing's the *ultimate* consumer device—that it can make all kinds of alterations in the space/time fabric of the universe, that it can do almost anything! He almost chickened out at the last minute, claiming the thing was dangerous and hadn't really been tested (it was under lock and key when he took it); he also mumbled something about it "blowing a fuse and throwing the Earth back into the Paleozoic Era." I think he was worried about getting caught; anyway, when he saw the amount of money I had for him, and the gun in my hand, he shut up and took the bribe fast enough; so much for his scruples. I'm standing here on my front lawn now, facing Jones's house, and as soon as the son-of-a-bitch (I know he's in there now with his Yellow Pages viewscreen, putting in hologram calls to every store in the state, trying to order a better model of what I've got—or at least to find out what it *is*) shows his face I'm going to throw the switch. I don't know what will happen, but whatever it is, no one can outdo it! I've beat you, Jones! Is that his face at the window? Yes! And now—

November 11, 400,000,000 B.C.

I move rock. Big rock. Slimy hands mine, and have dirt in mouth. Crawl up from sea. Wet sea. Now on dirt. Hard work to breathe, but I work. I stay on dirt now, for good.

Move rock. Nice rock, smooth on one side, flat on other side. Cool under rock, hide from Sun. Live under rock, on cool dirt. Nice.

I happy.

Other me crawl up from sea to dirt. I watch. He work breath, hard, for long time, and almost turn back to sea, but he stay. He look at me, under rock.

Now he move rock, other rock, bigger, more smooth on one side. Is bigger under, more cool. He move rock next to mine and crawl under, out of Sun. He look at me for a long time.

I mad.

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DJINN & DUCKWORTH

by Larry Eisenberg

art: Freff

This story, Mr. Eisenberg tells us, was inspired by his first visit to Israel (his daughter teaches in the music conservatory in Eilat), and Jerusalem was a high spot of the trip. The author is co-head of the Electronic & Computer labs at Rockefeller University in New York City, where he has worked for the past twenty years. There is a collection of Duckworth stories: a paperback from Collier titled Best Laid Schemes.

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I was kicking a recalcitrant tape drive when Duckworth shuffled in.

"Attacking inanimate objects again?" he snickered.

"I have to," I muttered. "Otherwise they forget who's the boss."

"Absolutely right," said Duckworth. "I quite agree. But that isn't what I came by for."

He waved a letter at me. It had an official-looking aspect to it. Reluctantly I took and read it.

"Great," I growled. "*You're* invited to give a paper on recombinant DNA at the international meeting in Jerusalem."

"And I want you to work up a talk, too," said Duckworth. "Something on modeling chemical structures by computer."

"You wouldn't settle for an exploration into the increased number of battered tape drives?"

"Maybe next time," said Duckworth. "For the moment, I need your paper to complement mine."

"Jerusalem," I said softly. "Hills, valleys, history."

"Precisely," said Duckworth. "So get to work at once!"

I did. And five months later, I found myself on an eleventh floor terrace at the Jerusalem Hilton, looking out over the city and staring at the brown Judaean hills. But I had a paper to deliver. I ate a mind-boggling breakfast of three different kinds of herring, several cheeses, sour cream, and other comestibles too numerous to mention. Then I set about rehearsing my talk. Late in the afternoon, I delivered it to an enthusiastic gathering. One chap buttonholed me, afterward.

"I *am* an Arab," he answered in response to my direct question. "My name is Farouk Hassad and I'm a native of Jerusalem. In fact I received my doctorate at an Israeli university."

I nodded amiably.

"I'm also fascinated by the possibilities of your approach to chemical modeling," he added. "You seem to get a lot of mileage out of very few assumptions."

"That's Dr. Duckworth's contribution," I said modestly. "My Nobel laureate friend is the chemist and I'm the programming engineer."

"A happy combination," he replied. "But I'd like to get a copy of your talk. I know it will be printed in the completed proceedings of this conference, but I'd rather not wait."

I was flattered.

"I have a copy in my room," I said. "Come back with me to my

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hotel and I'll give it to you."

We went back to the Hilton, and he waited in the lobby as I went up to my room. When I returned with the copy of my talk, Farouk Hassad was effusive in his thanks.

"Are you in research here?" I asked tentatively.

"Oh, yes," he said.

He waved his hand; but what it signified, I wasn't sure.

"At one of the universities?"

He shook his head quickly.

"Not a university. It's a privately funded research operation."

"Ah," I said. "What we call R & D, Research and Development."

"Something like that," he said.

Suddenly his face brightened.

"Perhaps you'd like to see my laboratory?"

I was delighted at his offer. A look at local science promised to be very interesting and I assured him of my extreme pleasure in accepting his kind invitation.

His small Fiat buzzed along the back roads of Jerusalem, till we came to a ramshackle array of wooden buildings. I was immediately surprised since most of the structures of the city were made of stone or concrete.

"Our plant is somewhat old," he said apologetically. "And since it's Friday, the Sabbath of Islam, you'll find the place is empty."

"I understand," I said.

But an edge of uneasiness had begun to slip into the atmosphere.

The lab was a curious compendium of old and new, dusty and polished. A soiled Bunsen burner was cheek by jowl with a spanking new gas chromatograph. And amid pestles and retorts was a small computer with a tape deck.

"You have a computer, I see?"

He scowled.

"An old Russian model," he said bitterly. "It works, if at all, intermittently."

He leaned over and kicked the tape deck.

"Ah," I said with a warm sense of camaraderie. "I see that you're a tape deck kicker, too. Does it help?"

"Never," he said. There was a wealth of despair in his words. "But it eases my heart."

"Mine too," I admitted.

I walked about the room and looked at various pieces of equipment.

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"Tell me," I asked, "are you researching the properties of gases?"

"In a sense. Actually we're more interested in applications."

I was puzzled.

"What kinds of applications? Thermal properties? Plasma?"

He smiled apologetically.

"I regret that I cannot say. It's a proprietary matter."

I was offended. I had given him my only copy of my paper and now he was holding out on me.

"I see," I said coldly.

"Please," he begged. "I've hurt your feelings. Perhaps I shouldn't have brought you here. But I wanted to repay your kindness in the only way I could. We're engaged in developing a startling new product, one that could revolutionize the Middle Eastern way of life. Beyond that I can say no more."

"It's all right," I said. "I didn't mean to impose on business secrets."

"Let me show you some of the other rooms," he said soothingly.

The Cold Room was stocked with fraction collectors of recent vintage. And a nuclear magnetic resonance instrument was the feature of another room. Farouk noted the light in my eyes with approval.

"We're not so backward, eh?" he chuckled.

A door to a small storeroom was partly opened and within it I saw a pile of metal lamps, old and dusty, all resembling those of Aladdin's tale.

"How quaint," I began, but Farouk quickly closed the door.

"Junk," he said hastily. "A lamp manufacturer once occupied these premises and we haven't gotten rid of his stock, yet."

"I'd love to bring one home to my wife, as a souvenir," I said.

"I'd be happy to let you choose a lamp," said Farouk. "But they're incredibly dirty."

He reached into a breast pocket to draw out a card case, extracting a white card as he did so.

"Mahomet Bey operates an antique lamp shop on Suq El Bazāar in the Arab Quarter of the Old City. If you enter by the Jaffa Gate, you'll find him about 100 meters down the road. Show him my card and you'll get a bargain."

With murmured thanks, I took the card.

"And now," said Farouk, "if you would allow me to ask a few questions on how you use the computer to construct models of gases?"

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"Why not?"

We talked for almost two hours. His questions were very probing, direct, incisive. It was clear that he was an expert in the subject and that his problem was an immediate one. But precisely *what* it was, I couldn't say.

That evening, I recounted all the details of my visit to Duckworth. He listened but his heart was clearly not in it. I took out Farouk's card and showed it to him.

"Tomorrow morning at Suq El Bazaar," I said dreamily, "I'm getting one of Aladdin's lamps."

"Good God!" cried Duckworth. "Are you going to inflict one of those hideous gewgaws on your poor wife?"

I stiffened.

"What does an ivory tower chemist know about *objets d'art*?" I said scathingly.

The conversation was over.

But right after breakfast, another gustatory delight, I set out in a brisk stroll along the Jaffa Road. When I reached the Jaffa Gate, I turned left and made my way eagerly along the Suq El Bazaar. Down the cobbled streets and into the tiny arcade of shops I wandered, bemused and fascinated by the enchanting sights and smells of the Arabian Nights atmosphere. There were spices of every color and description, pastries of honey-dipped layers. I tried one with slivers of pistachio and bits of almond. My fillings began to sing a threnody that pierced the very marrow of my bones.

It was just a few meters down that I came upon the lamp shop. There were heaped piles of lamps everywhere, all of chased bronze, with carefully-worked-out patterns in geometric form. Each lamp had taken on a patina of age although it was doubtful that any of them were much older than a few months. The proprietor came out and eyed me warily. I produced Farouk Hassad's card and his eyes creased as he smiled openly.

"A friend of Farouk Hassad is always welcome in my humble shop."

"About your lamps?" I began.

"Lamps?" he cried. "We cannot talk of lamps until you have shared a cup of coffee with me."

The coffee was served in tiny cups and was thick and sweet, a feature that made it doubly difficult for me to deal with. But I got it down by sheer strength of will. And with even greater efforts, I

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finally edged the conversation over toward the lamps. I picked one up at random.

"How much would this cost?" I asked.

The proprietor's eyes rolled up and he seemed to be deep in thought.

"To a friend of Farouk Hassad, I would prefer not to accept any money. But I am afraid that I would insult you if I did so. So let me propose two hundred Israeli pounds."

I did a quick mental calculation. He was asking for some thirteen dollars in American money. I had also heard that haggling over the price was *de rigeur* and I was not going to be rude. I put down that lamp and selected another. This one seemed genuinely old and it had a frayed ribbon tied about its neck which made it seem even older.

"How much for this one?" I asked once again.

He shrugged and counted on his fingers.

"That one is two hundred and fifty," he said, firmly.

I shook my head.

"One hundred," I replied and I could see his eyes light with joy, sense the tension easing out of his shoulders. He had been terrified that I would accept his first price and he almost wanted to embrace me for joining in the game.

"Two hundred," he said. "But only because you have an honest face, an American accent, and are a friend of Farouk Hassad. I might also add that I have fondness for our American brothers."

"And I reciprocate your fondness," I said. "One hundred and twenty-five."

He beamed lovingly at me.

"If only I could give it to you as a gift," he said. "But to avoid offending you, let us say instead, one hundred and seventy-five."

"I don't offend that easily," I said. "And I wouldn't give more than one hundred and twenty-five to my own mother. But to further fraternal relations between our peoples, I'll make it one hundred and fifty."

His sigh was deep and heartfelt. It was not the sigh of a man who had been bested or put upon. It was simply the sigh of a man who loved haggling and was sorry the joust was over.

"So be it," he said. "Shall I wrap it?"

I stifled the urge to say, "No, I'll eat it right here," and instead, nodded amiably.

I saw many other things as I wended my way along the cobbled streets of the Arab Quarter. I saw red radishes as big as a man's

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fist, cabbages like watermelons, and electronic devices fresh from Nippon. I stifled the urge to spend large sums of money and returned to my room bearing my lamp like a sleeping Venus.

After I had removed the wrappings, I stared at it intently for several moments and since I was alone, I rubbed it vigorously. No apparitions materialized, I was sorry to see.

There was a knock at my door and when I opened it, Duckworth was there. I was still holding on to my lamp and Duckworth chuckled in an obnoxious way.

"Have you summoned the genie, yet?" he asked.

"The proper word is *djinn,*" I said tartly. "Anyway, I think it's the wrong kind of lamp."

"Obviously," said Duckworth, taking the lamp from my reluctant fingers and subjecting it to an intense scrutiny.

"That's enough," I said. "Give it back."

"Wait a minute," said Duckworth.

He was worrying the handle of the lamp and applying a lot of force to it.

"Don't do that!" I cried. "You'll break the handle!"

But he had already pried back the handle and revealed a tiny mechanism just underneath it.

"Take a look," said Duckworth, bemused. "What do you make of this?"

I peered at the open handle and saw what appeared to be a sprocket of some kind.

"That can't be a sprocket?" I said incredulously.

"Why not?"

"Because that would make it of recent origin. And my lamp is really very old!"

"Why couldn't it have a sprocket *and* be old?" asked my friend. "Look at this damned thing. It has five sets of tracks on the sprocket and each one has a latch that opens and closes."

"Almost like a primitive paper tape reader, isn't it?" I said.

Duckworth looked at me.

"That's a wild idea," he said. "Or is it?"

And without another by-your-leave, he began rubbing the lamp.

"Don't do that!" I cried, forgetting how fruitless my own rubbing had been. "If there's a djinn in there, he's mine."

Naturally nothing happened, Duckworth was embarrassed, somewhat crestfallen, and I felt like an idiot.

"I guess there isn't any djinn," said Duckworth.

He handed the lamp back to me.

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"I should hope not," I said. "All of our academic careers have been directed toward science and away from mysticism. Djinns would not fit into our world view."

"Still," said Duckworth, "you must admit that the sprocket is provocative. What's it for? Do you suppose that if we put a bit of punched paper tape on it and ran it over the sprocket, something might happen?"

"No," I said firmly.

Nevertheless I set about improvising a bit of tape that would fit on the sprocket. Cutting and shaping with a pair of scissors was but a moment's work and then I applied the tape to the sprocket and gently eased it along. Nothing happened.

"Of course it doesn't work," said Duckworth. "We've got to code it properly."

"What code would a djinn require?"

"How the hell would I know?" he said testily.

He took the lamp and toyed with the bit of ribbon which had been tied about its neck.

"Here you go," he said, twiddling his fingers. The ribbon came free. "Look at it!" he cried.

I looked.

"I'll be damned," I said softly. "The ribbon seems to have a five track code punched into it. Run it over the sprocket."

For once, Duckworth seemed reluctant to go ahead.

"It's your lamp," he said. "You do it."

I took the bit of ribbon and edged it into the wheel and over the sprocket holes. When the ribbon was fully wound on, I tugged gently at its end and pulled it back. The sprocket spun rapidly. The tiny latches opened and closed in patterned sequence. And then, I suppose, I anticipated a blinding flash. There wasn't any.

But there was the sound of a valve opening and a trail of vapor began to edge slowly out of the lamp. As I watched it, jaw hanging open in wonder, Duckworth whipped out a test tube from his pocket and trapped a sample of the vapor in the tube. After using a rubber stop, he replaced the tube in his pocket. The vapor trail had continued to edge out of the lamp, its rate of movement accelerating each moment.

"It's going to take form," I said, awestruck.

And indeed it was. The vaporous mist had framed a turban, large Eastern features, arms, and a torso that ended at the waist.

"Master, I am here," said a sepuchral voice, but it said it in Arabic.

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"I'll be damned," said Duckworth. "It just said something to us in Arabic."

"I speak English, too," said the voice.

I almost leaped out of my skin.

"I think I'm hallucinating," said Duckworth.

"I know I am," I said.

"Rest assured that you are not," said the voice.

I looked warily at the vaporous shape which now seemed to have some semi-permanence of form if not of substance.

"Are you a djinn?" I asked.

"Most assuredly."

"And you were summoned by using that coded ribbon?"

"It is the only way. I respond only to the proper code."

I picked up the ribbon and made a rapid evaluation of its holes.

"It looks like ASCII code to me."

"But ASCII is of modern origin," said Duckworth. "I wonder when this lamp was made."

"We've had this code for a long time," said the djinn.

"That's all very interesting," I said. "But let's get down to business. Do we have only three wishes, or is our account unlimited?"

The djinn stiffened.

"I'm not *that* kind of djinn," he said in hurt tones. "I don't fetch and carry and bring things to you."

"No djinn and tonic?" asked Duckworth thoughtfully.

"Please forgive my friend," I said hastily. "What we'd like to know is exactly what you do."

"I'm a professional," said the djinn. "I write computer programs in an interpretive language."

Duckworth cocked an eyebrow at me.

"Do you believe any of this?"

I was perplexed as to how to answer him when a thought struck me. I turned to the djinn.

"Would you be prepared to write a program for me which arranges one hundred positive numbers in order of descending magnitude?"

Within the vaporous form, a scratch pad materialized and a pen. A methodical scrawling began. When it had ended, I was allowed to examine the pad. After copying the lines down on a pad of my own and examining them carefully, I turned to Duckworth.

"It's FORTRAN IV!" I cried.

"Why not? The Arabs were marvels at algebra," said Duckworth. "Algebra is of course an Arabic word. So naturally, a djinn

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would use an algebraic interpretive language."

"I may have another programmer on my hands," I said.

"If you take the lamp with us," said Duckworth thoughtfully, "you'll have to get him a visitor's visa as well as a work permit."

"I won't declare him! I'll just put him back in the lamp."

The djinn shifted nervously in his vapor.

"I'd rather stay out, masters. I'm claustrophobic. But if there would be difficulties at customs, retract the coded ribbon and I'll be taken back into the lamp."

"I hate to inconvenience you," I said apologetically. "But I think it would simplify matters."

So saying, I tugged back at the ribbon and the sprocket motion reversed. Slowly the vapor began to seep back into the lamp, leaving behind a few tiny wisps of unrestored vapor. And then, even these fragments were gone.

"I'm glad you did that," said Duckworth. "I'm not at my best talking to gas molecules."

"Nor I. If we tell anyone else about this, they'll see us as certifiable for the funny farm."

"Oh no," said Duckworth. "It's real enough."

He whipped the test tube out of his pocket.

"My friend, Dr. Krasnitz, has an excellent lab at the Hebrew University. I'm going to see what this vapor is composed of."

"You have the mind of the true chemist," I said. "That wouldn't be my first priority."

"Wouldn't it? Can't you see that if we find out the stuff of which djinns are made, we can duplicate them?"

"Do you think that djinns have DNA?"

"Why not?" cried Duckworth.

He slipped he tube back into his pocket.

"Enough of this chitchat. I'm off to put this gas through the most modern analytical devices known to chemistry."

I slept fitfully that night. I woke up once or twice to see if the lamp was still there. It was. In the morning, my ablutions were interrupted by the pounding on my door. Duckworth came in, terribly excited.

"You've discovered something?"

"My study was preliminary," said my friend, "but . . ."

"But what?"

"This djinn, and I suppose all djinns, if we assume that our djinn is typical of all djinns. . . ."

"For God's sake!" I bellowed. "Get it off your chest!"

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"I will, if you'll let me finish. This djinn has a rather interesting coded genetic complex which is much more highly developed than our own, for example. The coding has many more possibilities for variation. It's a rather ingeniously fashioned creature."

"Fashioned? Do you think somebody made it?"

"Who can tell? What I do know is that these gases are organic, that they can assemble in any shape according to coding. The djinn can also carry out mechanical movements, as you saw. It can produce vibrations in the sound region that are audible to us. But who made them or why, I can't answer."

This sentence was greeted with a siege of knocking at my door. When I opened it, there was Farouk Hassad, looking quite embarrassed.

"I can answer Dr. Duckworth's question," he said. "I was standing in the hallway with my ear pressed to your door, and I overheard all of your conversation."

"Do you know about our djinn?"

"He is one of my rejects," said Farouk. "He was my prototype, accidentally sent to Mahomet Bey: a programmable robot, a special purpose computer. But he doesn't work."

"Oh yes he does. He wrote a program for me."

Farouk's eyes became mournful.

"If you try to run the program, you'll understand why he really belongs to Mahomet Bey's lamp shop. His programs invariably bomb out. They are filled with subtle errors and egregious blunders."

"Couldn't you fix him up?"

"No," said Farouk. "There's a mistake in his genetic code."

"But you've accomplished wonders, nevertheless," I said. "You created a djinn that can almost program."

"I also designed one that can almost do neurosurgery. It invariably removes the wrong piece of brain tissue."

"I know a real surgeon who does the same," said Duckworth.

"And another of my djinns can almost design dresswear. But he turns out items that are *too* feminine."

"Not in the mainstream," said Duckworth.

Farouk sat down on my bed and put his head in his hands.

"I'm a total failure," he said. "My backers have given up on me. I'm two months in arrears on the rent for the plant. I have no money to meet the payroll."

Duckworth put his hand on Farouk's shoulder.

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"Your failures are superior to the successes of most men. Come to America where your talents can be put to useful purposes."

Farouk looked up, a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

"But who would have me?"

"Our military establishment," I said. "A man who can design things that *almost* work will be snapped up. Your efforts come so close that a military budget could be stretched out almost forever. Congressmen could be lured into providing the extra billions on the promise that soon, success would be achieved."

"He's right," said Duckworth. "Come with us and give your djinns to the armed forces. There might well be a Nobel peace prize at the end of your trail."

"A Nobel laureate?" breathed Farouk. "The first Arab to achieve that distinction? I'm sorely tempted."

"Then come," said Duckworth. "And while you're getting set up in the States, we'll arrange something remunerative for your little djinn. You can exhibit him on television talk shows, rent him out for commercials, or employ him as a greeter at a restaurant featuring cous-cous."

All of which we ultimately did. As for Farouk, he has risen high in the Defense Establishment. So high indeed, that our lack of security clearance makes even furtive communication with him impossible.

SECOND SOLUTION TO PINK, BLUE, AND GREEN
(from page 79)

Pink's first remark prompted a reply by the man with a blue hand, therefore Professor Pink is not a blue. Nor can he be a pink because then his name and skin color would match. Therefore Pink is a green.

The man with the blue hand cannot be Blue or Pink, therefore he is Professor Green.

This leaves pink for the skin of Professor Blue. Pink is green, Green is blue, and Blue is pink.

Now see if you can:

1. Find an anagram for GREEN, and
2. Change PINK to BLUE by altering one letter at a time so that after each alteration you get a familiar four-letter word. You must do it in no more than ten alterations. (See page 99.)

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THE SECRET
by Henry L. Lazarus & Darrell Schweitzer

Mr. Lazarus—now Dr. Lazarus, on his graduation from dental school—and Mr. Schweitzer both help your editor read stories submitted to this magazine. This is Dr. Lazarus's first sale, Mr. Schweitzer's forty-fifth.

The two lifelong friends sat by the fire, reminiscing.

"Mr. President," said the Senator. "It sounds strange to call you that, but now that you're elected we'll all be doing it."

"Yes, Ned."

"Mr. President, I tried for your job once, and failed miserably. But you've never lost an election. I hope it isn't too rash of me, your old friend, to ask what your secret is."

"I don't know that I have a secret, Ned."

"Yes you do. When you first entered politics you were something of an enigma. You seemed to know *exactly* what Joe Public was thinking and what he wanted. For forty years now you've tapped the national pulse, and you've never been wrong."

"A good thing for someone in our line of work, don't you think?"

"Yes, but *how*? What did you do before you started? Sell your soul to the Devil?"

"You know perfectly well what I did, Ned. I was an editorial assistant, for Howard W. Snurfle of *Resounding Science Fiction.* And since you are my friend, I'll tell you: science fiction editors have always been my chief advisors."

"Then the stories really *do* predict the future?"

The President laughed. "No, no. You see most professional science fiction writers are too good. They have the ability to step beyond themselves and the prejudices of their time. That's what I encouraged when I was an editor, but I could never keep my hand on the pulse of the voters with such fiction. What I need is writing that only skims the surface of the average, basically unimaginative person's concerns, thoughts, and beliefs. Very contemporary stuff, and quickly dated."

"But if that isn't what the magazines print, where—?"

"Oh, editors get it in piles. Unsolicited manuscripts. Slush piles."

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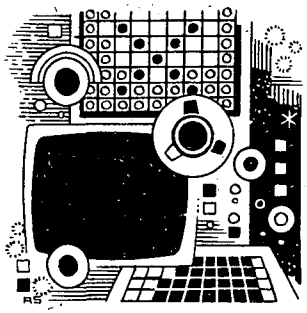
SIMULACRUM

by David J. Hand

art: Alex Schomburg



Dr. Hand, now 27, studied at Oxford and Southampton Universities, with degrees in mathematics and statistics. He is currently studying the effect of aircraft noise on mental health. Perhaps it's a coincidence, but he also has a black belt in judo and has twice been a gold medallist in that art. This story, set in the very near future, is the author's first sale.

Steve swung his red Triumph Spitfire into the car park. He was looking forward to the day's work. He'd completed the coding for the new simulation model the night before and should be able to test it today.

He brushed his long black hair from his eyes with one hand while slamming the car door with the other. Yes, today looked like being a good day!

With one bound he was up the steps to the entrance.

"Morning," he called brightly to the receptionist. "Old sour-puss in yet?"

"I take it you mean Mr Jackson," answered the receptionist. "No, I don't think he is in yet."

Steve hurried down the corridor to his office. Without bothering to remove his coat he settled down at the teletype and logged in. By the time Mr. Jackson arrived he had almost finished adding the new segments.

"Ah, Harrison. Here bright and early this morning, I see," said Mr. Jackson.

Steve ignored him. Couldn't the old fool see he was busy?

Mr. Jackson waited for a response until it became obvious that none was forthcoming.

"When will the new model be ready for tests?" he asked.

Steve sighed pointedly, pressed the Accept button, and wearily turned to face his boss.

"Within half an hour."

He turned back to the teletype.

Irritated, Mr Jackson left, closing the door unnecessarily firmly

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behind him.

"Today's youth," he muttered in annoyance as he walked down the corridor. "No respect for their elders. Drugs, long hair. It's a wonder anything ever gets done around here. Now, if I was responsible for recruitment . . .". He sighed and entered his own office.

"But I think *this* is the most promising set of parameters," said Steve, a slight whine creeping into his voice as he exaggerated his exasperation at Mr Jackson. "I would have thought it was obvious that we should try to keep alpha as large as possible. Surely any fool can see . . ."

"That's enough!" said Mr Jackson harshly. "Just remember you're only the programmer on this project. I think this is the best parameter set, so this is the one we'll run first." He hesitated. "But just to show you I'm not too unreasonable, we'll run your set second. Then we can compare the results of the two tests."

That would show the young upstart. Little idiot, thinking he could come straight in here and start telling everyone how to do things!

"Okay," said Steve. "I think you're wasting the Company's time and money, but if that's what you want to do." He went out and closed the door before Mr Jackson could reply.

Each one's eagerness to show he was right brought both of them to the line printer when it started to chatter out the results of the first test.

"Look at that," said Mr Jackson. "Surely that growth function is near the theoretical optimum! You're unlikely to find anything to beat that, Harrison!"

Steve said nothing. The old fool was right. Then his eyes caught another row of figures.

"Yes, the payoff's fine. But look at the cost. It'd be hard to beat that too! Difficult to find anything more expensive!" He chuckled as he saw Mr Jackson's face crease in irritation. "Wait till you see my results. Then we'll see who was right!"

It was the afternoon before the results of Steve's parameter choice began to come out. Again both he and Mr Jackson were waiting. But now they were beginning to wonder if they should have been so dogmatic.

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"He might have been right by chance. Beginner's luck," thought Mr Jackson, while: "He is supposed to be an expert. And that growth function was pretty impressive," thought Steve.

"It'll be interesting to see your results," said Mr Jackson aloud. "I must admit the cost function of my choice was rather higher than I'd expected."

"We'll have to wait and see. But if I'm right you wasted all this morning's processing time." Steve couldn't resist a final dig.

"Why," thought Mr Jackson, "couldn't the little idiot see I was trying to be friendly?" He said nothing but his face adopted a tight-lipped expression.

In silence they watched the output pour forth.

They both grabbed as the vital pages came out. After a brief tussle Mr Jackson won. He studied the numbers intently while Steve peered over his shoulder.

"There!" said Mr Jackson. "I was right. Your growth function's little better than half mine. And your cost is even higher."

He continued, swept high on a tide of elation: "Silly little fool. Thought you knew what you were doing, when you didn't have any idea. That explains why you're only the programmer and I'm in charge of this project. Perhaps that'll teach you to keep your mouth shut when you don't know what you're talking about."

Steve said nothing, but merely stared at the page of figures Mr Jackson had thrust into his hands. He could feel his anger mounting as his boss's tirade continued.

"Okay," he suddenly roared, cutting Mr Jackson off in mid-sentence. "I've had enough of this stinking hole anyway. And of you and your company. Don't know one end of a computer from another. Well, that's it. I'm resigning, as of now. Goodbye and good riddance." He marched from the room, slamming the door behind him.

Master Psychologist Phillips looked at his colleague.

"Well, Thompson," he said, "what do you think of that?"

Thompson's eyes were still glued to the VDU. With an effort he tore them away and returned Phillips's look.

"I'm surprised that it was so intense. I wonder if it's instability or an extreme of the stable range. Let's try another set of parameters."

He bent to the keyboard and began typing.

Steve swung his yellow Ford Capri into the car park. He was

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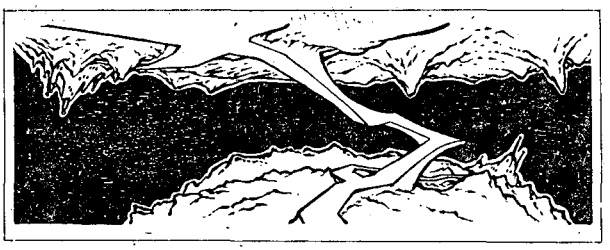
looking forward to the day's work. He'd completed the coding for the new simulation model the night before and should be able to test it today.

He ran one hand through his short blond hair while slamming the car door with the other. Yes, today looked like being a good day!



THIRD SOLUTION TO PINK, BLUE, AND GREEN
(from page 94)

1. The only anagram of GREEN is GENRE.

2. Lewis Carroll (who invented this word game) changed PINK to BLUE in nine steps as follows: PINK, PINT, PANT, PART, PORT, POUT, GOUT, GLUT, GLUE, BLUE.

By using one or two less familiar words it can be done in seven steps. Here is an example, using words that all appear in *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary:* PINK, PINT, PENT, PEAT, BEAT, BLAT, BLAE, BLUE.

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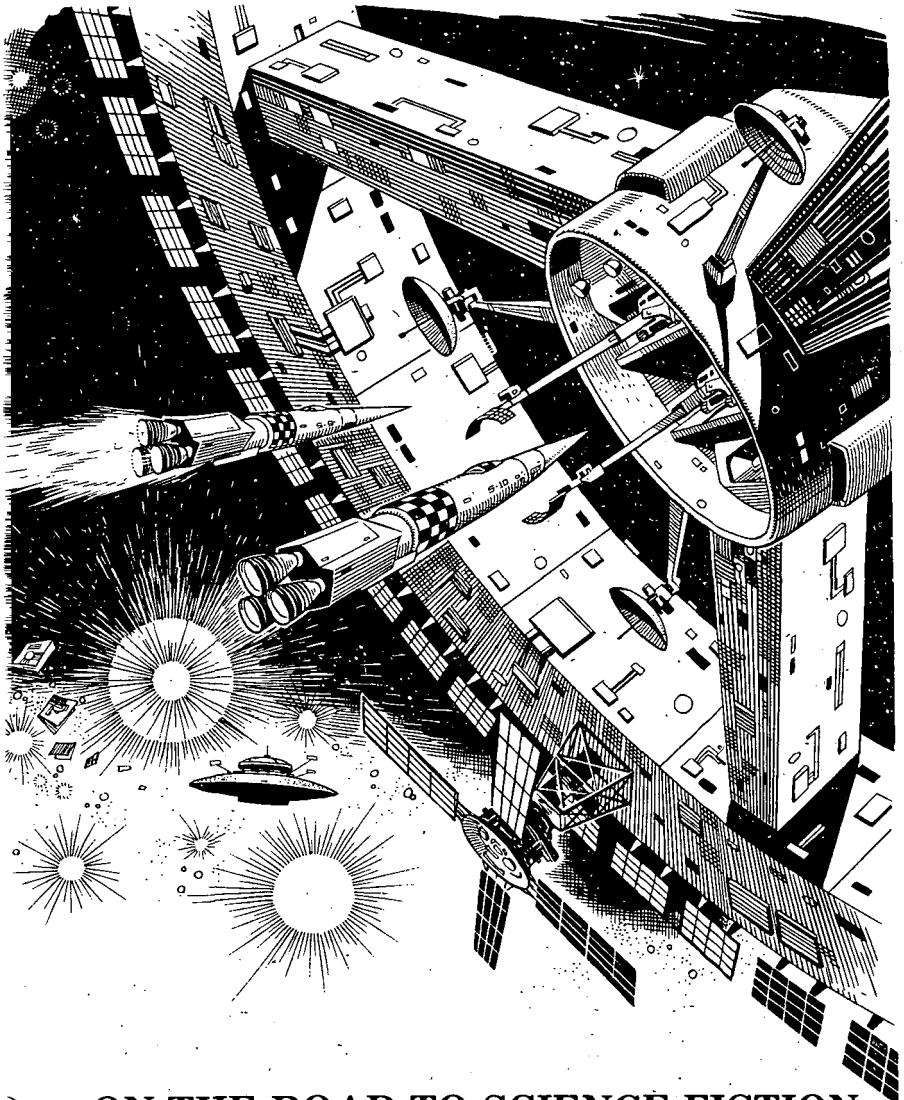

ON THE ROAD TO SCIENCE FICTION: FROM HEINLEIN TO HERE

by James Gunn

art: Alex Schomburg

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Mr. Gunn has written plays, screenplays, radio scripts, articles, verse, and criticism; but most of his publications have been science fiction.

The "golden age" of science fiction is a phrase that is frequently used by fans and critics, and just as frequently debated. What is the golden age of science fiction? When was it?

Isaac Asimov referred to the golden age in his anthology *Before the Golden Age* and dated it from 1938, when John Campbell became editor of *Astounding Stories,* to 1950, when other magazines, such as *Galaxy* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* entered the field.

Norman Spinrad in his anthology *Modern Science Fiction,* on the other hand, dates the golden age from 1966-1970.

The terms themselves are not as important as the attitudes toward science fiction that they imply. The entire history of science fiction has been a slow movement toward definition, and then, once the question seemed to be answered, the beginning of a movement away from it.

Definition is important, not merely for precision, so that everyone is talking about the same phenomenon, but because science fiction is protean and because disagreement is endemic, and because each change in publication and each creative advance redefines the genre. In terms of communication, for instance, "golden age" is defined as "the most flourishing period in a nation's literature" or "the flowering of civilization or art." Spinrad claims that science fiction did not flower until about 1965, when writers freed themselves from the conformity of the magazines and struck off in individual directions.

Some critics, however, add to that meaning a second sense of "an era of peace and innocence," and then the term may refer to the greatest amount of wonder and be properly applied to that age in which the enthusiastic reader discovers it; or more specifically, as Pete Graham has suggested, the age of 12. Asimov gives some agreement with this by designating everyone's personal golden age as the second decade of existence.

If "golden age" has the further meaning of the quality of its writing, science fiction continued to improve through the fifties

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and up to the present. But the magazine boom of the early fifties and the steadily increasing number of hardcover and paperback publications meant that the cohesiveness of science fiction, the ability of readers to keep up with it, to encompass it in a thought or a phrase, became increasingly difficult after 1950.

Until 1950 fans could read every magazine circulated and every book published, and search the library and second-hand stores for more science fiction—and still have time to publish voluminous fanzines. Until 1950 writers kept up with what other writers were doing and sometimes what readers said about it. After 1950 magazines increasingly went unread, books increasingly went unbought.

II.

The period that Asimov calls the "golden age" was a period not only of flowering but of consensus. Readers and writers knew what science fiction was: it was what was published in *Astounding*. The significant fact of the forties was the dominance of *Astounding* over science fiction and the dominance of John Campbell, the writer turned editor for Street & Smith at the age of 28, over *Astounding*. Campbell made the magazine over in his own image, and that image captured the imaginations and the beliefs of science fiction readers.

Other magazines were being published, some of them claiming circulations considerably more than *Astounding*'s—Ziff-Davis's *Amazing* edited by Raymond A. Palmer, for instance—but the outstanding stories, the influential stories, the stories that seemed to define what science fiction was and what it ought to be were appearing in *Astounding*.

Through the forties the magazines were the major—and sometimes the only—publishing medium for science fiction. Even when books began to be published, the anthologies were largely made up of stories from the magazines and the novels were reprinted serials. But even more than the centralizing fact of the magazines, the science fiction of the forties was a coming-together, a unification of wandering influences, a developing consensus.

The consensus was shaped by Campbell. Mostly he defined what science fiction was by the stories that appeared in the magazines, but he also talked about it in the controversial editorials that expressed his personal views; writers got large doses of theory in

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conversation and in long letters and in rejection slips ("Amusing," he might write, "but it ain't science fiction."), and once in a while he actually attempted to deal with the problem of definition in specific terms.

In 1952 he defined it in an article for Reginald Bretnor's *Modern Science Fiction:* "Fiction is only dreams written out; science fiction consists of the hopes and dreams and fears (for some dreams are nightmares) of a technically based society." Even more specifically he wrote in "The Science Of Science Fiction Writing" for Lloyd Eschbach's *Of Worlds Beyond* (1947) that "to be science fiction, not fantasy, an honest effort at prophetic extrapolation of the known must be made." And he went on to say:

> Prophetic extrapolation can derive from a number of different sources, and apply in a number of fields. Sociology, psychology, and parapsychology are, today, not true sciences; therefore instead of forecasting future results of applications of social science of today, we must forecast the *development of a science* [emphasis Campbell's] of sociology. . . . On the other hand, physics is, today, a real science and predictions must be based on the known data of the existing science.

These prescriptions became basic to science fiction. They were quoted to succeeding generations as the unbreakable laws of the genre. They united the streams of science fiction that had seemed to diverge from Verne and Wells, and diverted the stream of fantasy into another clearly defined channel.

Up to the time of Verne, science fiction had existed in forms that were possible to identify only in retrospect: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) may have been the first literary reaction to the impact of science on the world; Poe's "Mellonta Tauta" may have anticipated the literature of anticipation. . . . Before they could begin to create their work, the consequences of the Industrial Revolution had to become apparent to writers of fiction: the way it was changing the nature of human life, the way it was shaping the future. But even before the Industrial Revolution, writers had expressed humanity's desire to explore, to speculate, to hope and dream and fear. These became epics and tales, satires and utopias.

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III.

The three-volume anthology that I have been engaged in putting together under the general title of *The Road to Science Fiction* has been concerned primarily with definition: what is it? Besides their other qualities, the stories and excerpts have defined science fiction by their existence. Secondarily *The Road to Science Fiction* has been concerned with influences: how did it get to be that way?

The first volume, subtitled *From Gilgamesh to Wells,* was devoted to the kinds of literature that preceded science fiction or helped create the genre in the nineteenth century. It set down three criteria for the existence of science fiction: 1) people had to discover the future, a future that would be different from the past or the present because of scientific advance and technological innovation; 2) they had to learn to think of themselves not as a tribe, or as a people, or even as a nation, but as a species; and 3) they had to adopt an open mind about the nature of the universe—its beginning and its end—and the fate of man.

The first volume was concerned with the ways in which people's concept of the world was changed by their growing mastery of their environment, with the literature that was an expression of society's knowledge about the world and the forces that operated upon it, and with the ways in which the Industrial Revolution, and the changes it brought upon the way people lived and the way they thought about the world, created the future, and with it the response of writers that we call science fiction.

Jules Verne, the stage-struck French lawyer who discovered the power of technological marvels to create an audience for his adventure stories, based his extraordinary voyages mostly on engineering probabilities. In his later years he objected to H. G. Wells being called "the English Jules Verne" because Well's work was not based solidly on science. "I make use of physics," Verne wrote. "He invents."

Wells also denied the resemblance. "These exercises of mine . . . do not pretend to deal with possible things; they are exercises of the imagination in a quite different field."

The second volume in this series, subtitled *From Wells to Heinlein*, dealt with the second criterion: the ways in which people began to think of themselves, in their best moments, as a species, and how this was reflected in the literature that was a kind of consideration of humanity as a species: science fiction. Other fac-

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tors influenced the emergence of science fiction as a genre, of course. The means of publication became critical in Well's time; and he credited his early success, as well as the success of a number of other writers who began their work in the last decade of the nineteenth century, to the rise of new magazines and new readers.

The era of the mass magazines was brought about by the invention of pulp paper and the linotype machine, both in 1884; by the development of means to distribute magazines by railway and truck; by companies set up for distribution; and by a new reading audience created by mass education. By 1896 the mass magazines were joined by the pulp magazines, which offered nearly 200 pages of fiction for a dime. Frank Munsey's *Argosy* got competition after the turn of the century from Street & Smith's *The People's Magazine* and *The Popular Magazine,* and soon more than a dozen magazines competed for readers with adventure stories of all kinds, including some science fiction, or what passed for it. It too was adventure stories, and it reached a peak with Edgar Rice Burroughs and A. Merritt.

IV.

The category pulp magazines, which offered stories of a single kind, began in 1915 with Street & Smith's *Detective Story Monthly,* although Frank Munsey had experimented a decade before with *The Railroad Man's Magazine* and *The Ocean.* In 1919 Street & Smith produced *Western Story Magazine* and in 1921, *Love Stories.* The way was open for the first science fiction magazine, and it was finally offered in 1926 by a man who had published a long series of popular science magazines: Hugo Gernsback and his *Amazing Stories.*

Within three years *Amazing Stories* had rivals: Gernsback's own *Wonder Stories* in 1929 and then *Astounding Stories of Super Science* in 1930. Campbell, who was ranked the equal of E. E. Smith in creating space epics and who had turned to writing smaller-scale, more artistic stories under the name of Don A. Stuart, gave up writing in 1937 to assume the editorship of *Astounding.*

Donald A. Wollheim, in his *The Universe Makers* (1971) called Campbell "a victorious Vernian," but Campbell did not retreat all the way to Verne's insistence upon "physics." He was willing

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to permit, even encourage, speculation about the non-sciences becoming sciences. He applauded A. E. van Vogt's casual way with logic and scientific accuracy because von Vogt made it sound convincing; van Vogt waved his magic wand of words over the mystifying events, and the effect satisfied Campbell.

The result, after all, reasonably close to Well's prescription: "For the writer of fantastic stories to help the reader to play the game properly, he must help him in every possible unobtrusive way to *domesticate* the impossible hypothesis. He must trick him into an unwary concession to some plausible assumption and get on with his story while the illusion holds."

Rather than a Vernian, Campbell seems more like a synthesizer of the best from both writers: he insisted on plausibility in a science-important milieu, where scientists and engineers were central and were depicted accurately; but also, as an inspection of the fiction in *Astounding* would document, he was willing to publish the wildest kind of speculation if it was carefully thought out and convincingly presented.

He got a reputation for wanting gadget fiction or idea fiction, for publishing stories for engineers, but Campbell understood well enough the necessities of fiction and applied them to the kind of stories he published. He warned against good ideas poorly or even adequately written. And he pointed out that "a story—science fiction or otherwise—is a story of human beings. . . . In older science fiction, the Machine and the Great Idea predominated. Modern readers . . . want stories of people living in a world where a Great Idea, or a series of them, and a Machine, or machines, form the background. But it is the man, not the idea or machine, that is the essence."

Campbell's rigor, or his tastes, became critical to the development of science fiction. Fantasy was excluded from *Astounding*. So were stories whose logic was inadequate or whose development ran counter to Campbell's requirements, or his instincts. Such stories had to please the editors of other magazines or remain unpublished. Since *Astounding* paid more for stories than any other magazine, authors tried to sell their stories there first, and other magazines had to subsist on Campbell rejects or on the work of authors who were reconciled to the fact that they could not sell their work to Campbell. Some writers found ready acceptance, others were able to please him occasionally, and some never tried.

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V.

The measure of Campbell's effectivenes as an editor would turn on his ability to discover writers, because he could not write the stories himself. He discovered them in quantity. In Asimov's 1952 essay, "Social Science Fiction," he wrote, "The importance of Campbell is that he was not content to let Weinbaums spring up accidentally. He looked for them. He encouraged them."

Before 1940, Campbell published the first or the early stories of L. Sprague de Camp, L. Ron Hubbard, Eric Frank Russell, Lester del Rey, Robert A. Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, A. E. Van Vogt, and Asimov himself. In addition he reinvigorated or redirected the careers of such older writers as Jack Williamson, "Doc" Smith, Clifford Simak, and Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore (individually and as a man-and-wife writing team under a variety of pseudonyms).

Together Campbell and his writers satisfied, almost as a by-product of their activities, the third criterion for the existence of science fiction: they freed themselves from old concepts about the nature of the universe—cultural and religious—and began an extended fictional debate about the beginning and the end of things, and the meaning and fate of humanity, which resulted in a kind of consensus within science fiction.

Part of that consensus was expressed by Heinlein in his guest-of-honor speech in 1941 at the third World Science Fiction Convention in Denver. He called his speech, as Wells had called his talk before the Royal Institution nearly four decades earlier, "The Discovery of the Future." Heinlein said that what had attracted him primarily to science fiction was a quality called "time-binding," which he identified as a term invented by Alfred Korzybski to describe the fact that the human animal lives not only in the present but in the past and in the future. Most people, Heinlein said, live from day to day or plan ahead for a year or two.

> Science fiction fans differ from most of the rest of the race by thinking in terms of racial magnitudes—not even centuries but thousands of years. . . . That is what science fiction consists of: trying to figure out from the past and from the present what the future may be.

More specifically, the fictional debate resulted in a consensus

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future history that Wollheim summed up in *The Universe Makers*. It was not entirely Heinleinian, although Heinlein was the first writer to base his early stories on a consistent future. It had large elements of Asimov's "Foundation" stories and contributions by such earlier authors as "Doc" Smith, Edmond Hamilton, and Olaf Stapledon. Later additions and refinements were made by such authors as Poul Anderson, James Blish, Larry Niven, and Ursula K. Le Guin.

That future history encompassed man's conquest of space and his colonizing of the Moon and the planets, his struggle to reach the nearer stars, followed by the rise and fall of the galactic human empire, the dark ages, and the rediscovery of the human galaxy and the variety of human forms and societies into which humanity had developed.

That consensus future left room for almost any kind of story a writer wished to create, including many in which some misadventure or miscalculation kept that future from happening: Earth runs out of resources before spaceflight has made other resources available; Armageddon destroys civilization; societies rigidify through religion or tyranny; a careless invention or its side-effect destroy humanity or its initiative; pollution, plague, or cosmic accident wipe out humanity or civilization or the earth itself; or the aliens arrive first.

The consensus existed in the conviction not that man would achieve the planets and the stars, but that he should, and anything that kept him from that goal was bad not only in itself but because it was a frustration of his destiny. Science fiction saw man as a creature that had struggled up from a single-celled amoeba, that had endured the long travail of evolution, the challenge of a million hostile life forms, the thousand ills and mishaps the world provides, and the historic process of oppression, liberation, and the slow accumulation of knowledge. Now he stands, self-aware, his two feet upon the Earth that he has earned and his eyes lifted to the stars. Equipped with tools he has made, he sees beyond and beneath the appearance of things to the essential reality; he considers the universe, how it came to be and what will become of it, and asks what is his place in it.

Campbell writers shared the optimism of the scientific community; they felt that man was progressing both in mastery of his environment and of himself, that though there would be slips and regressions mankind would win through, or the tragedy would lie in the fact that he was frustrated by chance or miscalculation.

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They agreed with William Faulkner that man would not only endure: he would prevail.

VI.

Other choices emerged at the end of 1949 and the beginning of 1950 with the appearance of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* edited by Anthony Boucher (1911–1968) and J. Francis McComas (1910–1978) and of *Galaxy Science Fiction* edited by H.L. Gold (1914–). They looked at science fiction from other viewpoints, and the Campbell consensus, though it still had its adherents and its influence, began to fragment.

The policy-maker for *F&SF* was Boucher (whose real name was William Anthony Parker White), and the policy was improved literary quality. The original title was *The Magazine of Fantasy* (changed with the second issue); the generic aspects of science fiction were minimized. Boucher liked a good story, but he liked good writing even more. The mixture of science fiction and fantasy suggested other characteristics. Fantasy requires only internal consistency, no more than the compass of one author's head, but science fiction—up to this point, at least—had demanded consistency with the rest of the universe. Some rigorous science fiction appeared in *F&SF* but much of what was published was fantasy and stories that were difficult to categorize.

Galaxy, on the other hand, established its own rigor. Gold wanted science fiction, but he wanted it written to his specifications. His requirement was entertainment. "There is nothing as grim," he wrote once, "as an entertainment man in search of entertainment." His view of life was ironic. He wanted fiction not about scientists and engineers but about average citizens caught up in worlds not of their making who find ways not to cure but to endure.

F&SF reunited the streams of fantasy and science fiction in a turbulent bed; it produced a tolerance for anything written well that encouraged many established writers to attempt stories previously unpublishable and induced into the field new writers who found Campbell's requirements incompatible or uninspiring. *Galaxy* specialized in the social satire; here the Wellsian influence was stronger, and a generation of writers who had been working on the fringes of Campbell's world found a home for their darker

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visions of the future of humanity, and some *Astounding* writers were drawn away.

One reason for the crack in *Astounding*'s dominance was rates for writers. Except for the brief largesse of the Clayton *Astounding* from 1930–1933, rates (always by the word) had been consistently low. A penny a word was considered good. That was lower than rates in other pulp magazines, and it was a persistent irritation that confession magazines paid two or three times as much. Campbell's *Astounding* paid the highest rates throughout the forties, but in the fifties *Galaxy* offered an escalating rate starting at three cents a word. Campbell matched it but did not outbid Gold. The rates at *F&SF* were a bit lower but still better than the other markets, and its editorial policy was sufficiently appealing that it kept many authors in spite of the gap.

The fifties also was a boom period for new magazines. Anywhere from three to fourteen new magazines a year were started between 1949 and 1953; many died quickly, and by 1953 more magazines were killed than new ones born. Publishers had overestimated the influence of the atom bomb and rocketry on the magazine-buying public; although people were living in a science fiction world, they had not yet recognized it. Nevertheless, there were thirty or forty magazines on the stands at one time, and this was a great encouragement to new writers. They emerged in substantial numbers.

VII.

Other influences on the development of science fiction made their presence felt more gradually. After World War II science fiction once more began to appear in books. Ever since the creation of *Amazing,* book publishers had virtually ignored science fiction, but now anthologies and novels began to appear. They were read avidly by magazine readers but they did not alter tastes; they reinforced them, for they mined twenty years of magazines for treasure, short stories for anthologies and serials for novels, and th chief source was *Astounding.* Of the 35 stories published in *Adventures in Time and Space* (1946) edited by Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas, 32 were published in *Astounding* and all but four of these had been purchased by Campbell. In the other big postwar anthology, Groff Conklin's *The Best of Science Fiction,* the proportion of stories from *Astounding* was not quite

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as high.

Anthologies tended to be published by mainline publishers such as Viking, Crown, Random House, and Pellegrini & Cudahy, but the novels, with a few exceptions, were published by fan presses established for this purpose. Most of them published a few books and went broke; a few, such as Arkham House, Gnome Press, and Shasta survived for several years. A few traditional publishers had been interested in science fiction novels early—Simon & Shuster, for instance—and they were joined in 1949 by Frederik Fell, Doubleday, and Dutton. Scribner's became involved through Heinlein's juveniles, then Winston, and Harcourt Brace with Andre Norton's novels.

That marked the beginning of a new era in science fiction publishing: the novel that did not appear first in the magazines. Gradually, as Ace books began to publish original science fiction in paperback, joined by Ballantine in 1952, the opportunity to publish without regard for the magazines and their requirements became a significant alternative. In 1951 this became true of short stories as well with the publication of Healy's anthology of original fiction, *New Tales of Space and Time*. In 1952 Frederik Pohl began editing a series of original anthologies for Ballantine in paperback entitled *Star Science Fiction*. They provided another market, less restricted by editorial requirements than magazines and often better paying. In the sixties the original anthology would burgeon into a significant alternative and become a major factor in breaking the magazine's hold on the genre.

Publication of original short stories and novels in books began encouraging individual expression over conformity to an editor's concept of the genre or the tastes of his readers, but it also began to diffuse the definition. Science fiction had been defined, in practical terms, as what was published in the science fiction magazines, *Astounding* in particular; now it had to be identified by the designation "science fiction" on the book, or by significant words in the title, or by identifiable symbols—rocket, alien, spacesuit, planet—on the cover.

Some science fiction began to be published in other media: the slick magazines, while they survived, had begun to publish Heinlein's short stories after World War II, *Collier's* serialized *The Day of the Triffids* by John Wyndham (John Beynon Harris, 1903–1969), *The Body Snatchers* by Jack Finney (1911–), and *No Blade of Grass* by John Christopher (C.S. Youd, 1922–). Ray Bradbury was successful even earlier in selling his brand of science fiction

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and fantasy to *Mademoiselle, Charm, Esquire, New Yorker,* and *Harper's.*

With the demise, one by one, of the slick fiction magazines, the men's magazines, beginning with *Playboy*, began publishing frequent science fiction stories, often by well-known science fiction writers. Even films and television began to offer new opportunities for the science fiction audience and sometimes the writers.

In the forties arguing with John Campbell about the definition of science fiction was futile; if he said a story wasn't science fiction it probably didn't get published, or if it did get picked by one of the other magazines it was only salvage money. Debating the matter with Tony Boucher or Horace Gold in the fifties was little better. But in the sixties, democracy began a leveling process that made one man's definition virtually as good as another's.

The proliferation of markets meant a fragmentation of readership and the author's single-market attitude. By the mid-sixties science fiction, as a consequence, was clearly changing.

VIII.

Between 1940 and 1965 events in the larger world continued to shape science fiction along with everything else: World War II illustrated the increasingly technical nature of civilization. With the development of sonar, radar, jet aircraft, rocket weapons, atom bombs, and a hundred other laboratory products for war, it demonstrated the need for scientists and engineers and research institutions, as well as an educated citizenry that could understand what was going on and control the direction of society. Money poured into research and education; the inevitable outcome was an acceleration of technological change. A bit more than a decade later the situation was reinforced by the shock of Soviet precedence in space.

What was happening in the world seemed like an affirmation of everything that Campbellian science fiction had been saying: the atom bombs and the rockets were symbols of science fiction's prophetic power as well as authentication of its concern for the future. What the authors had been writing about in the thirties and forties was coming to pass; the issues they had been raising were being pressed upon humanity. We were living, as Asimov put it, in a science fiction world, but not everybody liked it. The horrors

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of near-total war brought its disillusionment with the science and technology that had put power into the hands of madmen; for many people the world was moving too fast, and they felt powerless to affect their own fates. And the future held the prospect of World War III, the atomic war that might eliminate humanity.

Astounding had never glorified war. In fact, in 1940 it serialized L. Ron Hubbard's (1911–) novel *Final Blackout,* depicting how the coming war might reduce civilization to barbarism. Heinlein's "Solution Unsatisfactory" (written under the pseudonym of Anson MacDonald) described in 1941 the development of an atomic weapon to end World War II and the unsatisfactory nuclear stalemate that would follow, and the year before, in "Blowups Happen," he dramatized the dangers of atomic energy, a caution that was repeated in 1942 by Lester Del Rey's "Nerves." Nevertheless, *Astounding* had believed in science, and science had given war the power to destroy everyone. One way to attack that problem was to attack science, or so it seemed.

Other events occurred in their time: holographs were invented; the nuclear fission reactor and the hydrogen bomb were perfected; the Korean War—the first of the limited wars—broke out; Senator Joseph McCarthy symbolized an era of cold-war hysteria, blacklists, investigations, and purges; space exploration began and a competition to be first on the moon was launched by President Kennedy; the laser was invented; quasars were discovered; and the Vietnam War escalated into American involvement.

Increasing power and accelerating change meant only increasing frustration for many. How was power to be used; how was change to be directed? Should both be rejected?

The question of the terms on which society was to be organized, of the order in which society should rank its values, was raised on campuses across the nation. Led by veterans of civil rights battles, fueled by anti-Vietnam War sentiment, disagreement over strategy escalated into a near-rebellion over fundamental issues that discouraged one president from running for a second term and embittered the tenure of another and, in the process, undermined public confidence in higher education. The most visible young people questioned the value of knowledge and learning, and elevated feeling right into a philosophic position.

In this period a new group of writers emerged or graduated into maturity.

Science fiction develops in cycles or waves. Poul Anderson has speculated about the phenomenon and so has Damon Knight.

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Like many cycles it may be only the attempt of the observer to bring order to disordered data, but a new group of media and writers seems to surge forward every 12 years or so. The creation of *Amazing* in 1926 was followed 12 years later by the Campbell editorship of *Astounding*, a handful of new writers, and a flock of new magazines. That was followed in 1950 by the creation of *F&SF* and *Galaxy* (and several dozen more magazines) and the appearance of groups of writers primarily oriented toward each publication, though many crossed over. The next surge may have been delayed a couple of years. Michael Moorcock's *New Worlds* began in 1964, and Damon Knight launched his influential series of original anthologies, *Orbit,* in 1966.

These last were the beginnings of what later would be called "the new wave," which would attract a group of bright young writers more interested in literature than in science and disposed to disregard, resent, or react against the kind of science fiction that had been published earlier. The progress of the reaction against what has been called the pulp tradition or, to put it another way, the evolution to another stage in science fiction's development is easy to summarize and almost as easy to falsify. It neither began as abruptly as it seemed nor was as unified as it looked.

IX.

Ted Carnell (1912–1972) gave up the editorship of *New Worlds,* a venerable British science fiction magazine founded in 1946, and Moorcock took over for new publishers. From the first he encouraged the most extreme expressions of style in writing and of new morality in subject. His symbol was J. G. Ballard. In Ballard's wake came other writers attracted by the excitement and the freedom: Brian Aldiss, John Brunner, Charles Platt, and such transplanted Americans as Thomas Disch, John Sladek, Pamela Zoline, Norman Spinrad, and James Sallis. *New Worlds* lost distribution and perhaps some readers but managed to keep going and even enter a glossy art period, with the help of grants from the British Arts Council. Names like Roger Zelazny and Gene Wolfe began to appear in its pages.

Finally a carryover from the Campbell era, writer-editor Judith Merril, arrived in England. She had been editing the most in-

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fluential and for a time the only best-of-the-year anthology, and her selections had become increasingly personal. Now, captivated by the *New Worlds* experiment, she began a personal campaign to spread it across the ocean, first naming it "the new wave," then including examples of it in her anthologies, culminating in *England Swings SF* (1968).

In the United States the reaction against traditional science fiction was symbolized by the 1965 announcement by Harlan Ellison that he was going to publish an anthology for Doubleday of taboo-breaking stories, stories that couldn't be published in the magazines. *Dangerous Visions* was published in 1967. Whether or not Ellison got stories that couldn't have been published in the magazines (he admitted that only half a dozen writers really understood the freedom he offered), the book earned its contributors two Hugos and two Nebulas, and Ellison the undesired title (bestowed by the *New Yorker)* of "the chief prophet of the new wave."

About this time writers who were doing their own thing and resenting the older and more restrictive terminology began to call what they were creating "speculative fiction." The words weren't new—Heinlein had proposed them in 1947—and no more precise than "science fiction"; "science fiction" was too narrow (all of it is not necessarily about science) and "speculative fiction" was too broad (what fiction can't be called speculative?). But it revealed how these new writers felt about science fiction.

What the writers of the new wave were doing, insofar as they could be lumped together, was to reinterpret science fiction in personal terms. They moved from an objective universe to a subjective one; what they wrote resembled fantasy in its abandonment of the world of shared experience for the world of internal reactions. Their viewpoints, intensely personal, tended to protest the established order and even the traditional way of perceiving reality. Their methods—stylistically experimental—emphasized the personal over the general.

The reaction of traditional science fiction, both of its readers and its writers, was outrage, and for a while gladiators disputed the possession of the field: that area of explained fantasy that I have defined in the following terms:

> Science fiction is the branch of literature that deals with the effects of change on people in the real world, as it can be projected into the past, the future, or to distant places. It often concerns itself with scientific or technological change, and it

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usually involves matters whose importance is greater than the individual or the community; often civilization or the race itself is in danger.

This definition the new wave writers would have found unsatisfactory; like the writers Prof. Robert Scholes calls "the fabulists," they viewed the universe as unknowable and reality as the projection of cultural agreement. Since reality was indefinable, science fiction and fantasy were indistinguishable and one writer's interpretation was as good as another's.

Since the mid-sixties many new opportunities for publication have come along, mostly in the form of anthologies of original stories. The *New World* experiment dwindled and died, but new writers attracted to the field have published their different kind of stories in *Orbit* and in anthologies edited by David Gerrold, Vonda N. McIntyre and Susan Janice Anderson, Ed Bryant, and Robin Scott Wilson, who founded the Clarion Workshops for science fiction writers at Clarion College and transplanted them to Michigan State University, which have educated a new generation of writers. And Ellison produced *Again, Dangerous Visions* in 1972 and promised a final volume in the three-volume series, *Last Dangerous Visions*, which has been eight years in gestation.

One thing is certain: before *Last Dangerous Visions* appears, the waves will have quieted. The revolution is over. Much of what the rebels wanted is now accepted without question, and the urge to shock and to break taboos for their own sakes has diminished to occasional youthful exuberance. Even the most traditional of science fiction writers has enjoyed some of the new freedom and the new, broader audience that the New Wave has attracted.

The means was tolerance of difference. The price was definition and the old consensus. But science fiction once more is at peace.

X.

The anthologies of original stories represented a significant alternative to magazine publication for a time. In the early seventies one indefatigable anthologist had contracted with publishers to edit more than fifty anthologies. Other editors were busy as well, and many young writers had the opportunity to be published there. But soon the market was glutted, as it had been glutted with new magazines in the early fifties; and the original anthol-

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ogy market now has faded to a few regulars: *Orbit, New Dimensions,* and *Universe,* and an occasional special.

The book market is another matter. It has continued to boom, increasing in actual numbers and in percentage of the fiction market virtually every year. Between 1972 and 1976 the number of hardbound books published each year increased from 103 to 346, and the number of paperbacks, from 235 to 608. Approximately half were new titles and half reprints. The nearly 1,000 science fiction books published in 1976 meant that one of every eight or nine books of fiction published was science fiction.

More science fiction writers are making a living out of their writing. Few had been able to do that in the past; and those who had, with the exception of Heinlein and possibly van Vogt, had to turn out first draft stories at a rapid rate and even then reduce their standards of living or take other jobs periodically.

More time for writing meant better writing, more thoughtful writing, more artistic writing. The book market also meant that many established writers were too busy writing books to bother with less rewarding short fiction. New writers appeared to fill up the gap in the magazines: Joe Haldeman, for instance, and George R. R. Martin, Lisa Tuttle, Gregory Benford, Alan Dean Foster, George Zebrowski, Pamela Sargent, Jack Dann, Vonda McIntyre, Jerry Pournelle, Josephine Saxton, Ed Bryant, Spider and Jeanne Robinson, Stephen Goldin, Kathleen Sky, C. L. Grant, Michael Bishop, George Alec Effinger, Gardner Dozois, John Varley, the late Tom Reamy, Joan Vinge, P.J. Plauger, Gordon Eklund, Craig Strete, Felix Gotschalk, and many others. Some of them, of course, moved quickly into the writing of novels.

Some went straight to writing novels without serving an apprenticeship with the short story, such as David Gerrold, C. J. Cherryh, Jack Chalker, and Tanith Lee.

The magazines for a time seemed like stepchildren and like stepchildren they were often out of mind. The younger generation that had made cult books out of Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land,* Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings,* and Herbert's *Dune* had grown up reading paperback books, not magazines and seldom hardcover books. Only after readers became fans and began collecting books did they begin to value more permanent bindings. There was a growing audience for hardcover books that made best-sellers or good sellers out of some of them, such as Herbert's *Children of Dune*; only a small part of that audience were regular science fiction readers—a larger part was libraries and regular

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hardcover purchasers who occasionally bought science fiction when it appealed to them, which meant when its assumptions were limited and its generic demands were small, as in Michael Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain* and Ira Levin's *The Boys from Brazil.*

For a while it seemed that the magazines might be relics of a different past—the past of pulp magazines and plentiful markets for short fiction—and like all relics, doomed to eventual extinction. Though their numbers did not diminish below the handful of basic magazines that had carried science fiction through boom and bust, circulations decreased alarmingly in the early seventies, and some magazines barely clung to existence. Occasionally a new magazine would start up hopefully, like the experimental *Vertex,* and then fail within a few issues or a few years.

By the mid-seventies, however, a new surge of sales increased the circulations of several magazines, sometimes dramatically, and several new magazines were created: *Cosmos,* which had a promising beginning but was killed before it could prove itself; *Galileo,* which was attempting, successfully it seems, to sell itself entirely by subscription; and *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine,* which was making a surprising run at *Analog* (the long-time, renamed leader, *Astounding*). *Isaac Asimov's Magazine* went from quarterly to monthly in two years and added a companion, *Asimov's SF Adventure Magazine.*

XI.

The direction in which science fiction seems likely to go, however, is toward less generic identification rather than more. The magazines will continue, apparently, to provide a group of readers with short fiction identified by their editors as science fiction, though the breadth of subject and treatment will continue to increase, not only across the field but within any one magazine. Ben Bova relaxed John Campbell's rigid standards at *Analog*; the new editor will make more changes. The magazines, however, will be published for a hard-core readership that may have grown large enough to support more magazines better. One measure of the size of that hard-core readership may be the increasing attendance at world and regional science fiction conventions. Insatiable convention-goers not only can attend a gathering every week of the year but often can choose between several.

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Books have become increasingly individualistic. Merely to identify a book as science fiction, then, may no longer be sufficient to enable readers to decide whether they will like it. The growing difficulties of definition may be one reason behind the success of certain publishing lines, such as DAW and Ballantine (whose science fiction and fantasy now is published under the name of Del Rey), whose editorial decisions have some predictability. It also may explain the popularity of certain writers, who have a consistent style, subject matter, or reputation for quality, and of books in series, such as those by Frank Herbert, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Philip José Farmer, and a dozen others: once a reader discovers what he likes, he knows where he can get more of the same.

The absence of any consensus definition of science fiction also may help explain the sudden popularity of fantasy, particularly long, involved books or series of books, like *The Lord of the Rings,* which publishers once considered poor risks.

Finally an audience has been growing for imaginative literature, speculative fiction, science fiction—take your pick—that has no generic identification. Mainstream writers from John Barth to Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., have used science fiction materials with increasing frequency and found critical and popular success outside the genre. Some writers find that the label "science fiction" on their books is a handicap to sales rather than a help, and are demanding, as Vonnegut once did, that their books be marketed for the mainstream. Whether they can break free, like Vonnegut, and find equivalent success remains to be tested.

Some writers have complained that the best writing in the field does not sell as well as the worst, as if this were a truth confined to science fiction. The best-seller list is not the place to look for literary quality; but, on the other hand, nothing is as dead as last year's best-seller, and the best writers continue to sell steadily. Science fiction readers have been at least as faithful to quality as the mainstream and perhaps more.

Writers, however, have expressed an understandable impatience with the expectations of publishers, which affect and sometimes control the expectations of critics and purchasers. Identification as science fiction provides a floor under book sales but also claps on a ceiling that only a few genre books have managed to break through. If a book is published as science fiction, publishers, booksellers, and critics will not expect it to sell tens of thousands of copies, and their expectations represent a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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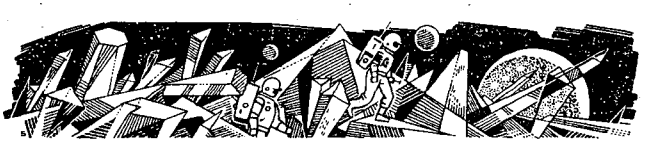
XII.

In 1967, in the introduction to *Dangerous Visions*, Harlan Ellison wrote, "The millennium is at hand. We are what is happening."

That statement seems truer today than it was more than a decade ago. Science fiction has been liberated from whatever restraints it accepted or the outside world placed upon it: subject and how it is handled are no longer an issue; opportunities for publications are sufficiently varied that almost any effective presentation has a chance for success on its own terms, even visually (motion pictures, television, comic strips, illustrated stories) or aurally (records have done well); a broad audience nurtured on the images of science fiction, educated by their peers, and catalyzed by such popular successes as "Star Trek," *2001: A Space Odyssey, Star Wars,* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind,* is favorably disposed toward the literature of the imagination.

The exact nature of the millennium is unclear, however. A few questions remain to be answered: What role will the magazines play? Will breakthroughs in book publication overcome problems of genre expectations? Will social attitudes and scientific and technological influences continue to support a literature of anticipation? Will the quality of mass audience presentations lead readers toward or away from the literature?

The answers to all of those depend not merely on general social trends but on the actions of individuals. The history of science fiction has been created both by broad general attitudes and by the responses of writers and editors. What new Wellses, Campbells, Heinleins, Asimovs, and Kubricks will come along to lead science fiction in new directions? How will they define it?



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MARS MASKED

by Frederik Pohl

art: Jack Gaughan

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The author has been – and in many cases still is — a fan, writer, agent, writer, editor, and writer. He's edited a half-dozen SF magazines, more recently been senior editor for Bantam Book's SF line, and currently divides his time between writing and lecturing, for which he travels widely. Home for Mr. Pohl is just a few miles down the road from Long Branch NJ, where the action of this story begins.

I.

The day they came for the Reverend H. Hornswell Hake was his thirty-ninth birthday, and his secretary, Jessie Tunman, had baked him a cake. Because she was thoughtful and sentimental, she had only put two candles on it. Because she was Jessie, she dumped it in front of him with a scowl. "That's very kind of you, Jessie," he said, eyeing the coconut frosting he disliked.

"Yeah. Better eat it fast, because your nine o'clock people are getting out of that kiddie-car of theirs right now. Aren't you going to blow out the candles?" She watched him do it. "Well, happy birthday, Horny. I know you'd rather have chocolate, but it gives you blackheads."

She did not wait for an answer, but closed the door behind her.

Naturally she had caught him stripped down to his shorts, doing his barbells in front of the mirror. Now that he had stopped exercising he was freezing; he quickly pulled out a drawer and dropped the weights into it, drew on his pants, put lined boots over his sweatsocks, and began buttoning his shirt, covering the great network of scars that curved under his left nipple. By the time his first counseling people showed up he was sitting behind his desk, looking once more like a Unitarian minister instead of a jock.

Another marriage down the tube if he didn't save it. It was a responsibility he had accepted long ago, when he took the vows at the seminary, but time didn't make it easier. He offered the young people some birthday cake and settled himself to listen to their complaints and accusations one more time.

Hake took all his ministerial duties seriously, but counseling more seriously than most. And of all the kinds of problem-solving and support his congregation asked of him, the kinds involving

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marriage were the hardest and the most demanding. They came to him for marriage counseling, bright-faced, with the gentle veneer of young sophistication and the tender, terrified insides; and they came to him again later on, most of them did, with the frayed look of anger and indigestion for divorce counseling. He gave them all the best he had.

"I really love you, Alys!" Ted Brant yelled furiously.

Hake gazed politely at Alys. She was not responding. She was staring tight-lipped into the corner of the room. Hake repressed a sigh and kept his silence. That was half of counseling: keeping your mouth shut, waiting for the about-to-be-married or the considering-divorce to come out with what was on their minds, really. His feet were cold. He reached down inconspicuously and rearranged the afghan he had wrapped around them.

A knock on the door broke up the tableau, and Jessie, his secretary, peered around it. "Sorry," she said urgently, "but this seemed important." She left a note on the glove table and closed the door again, smiling at the young people to show that she was not really interrupting.

Horny shook his feet out of the afghan and padded over in carpet slippers to look at the note:

> A man from the Internal Revenue wants to talk to you right away.

"Oh, God," he said. His conscience was as clear as most, which is to say not all that clear. Not that he expected to have any real problem. But he was used to having non-problems that turned out to be interminable annoyances. One of the good things about being a clergyman was that so much of what people spent money on was, for you, deductible: the house larger than a single man really needed, justified because so many rooms were used for church purposes, like counseling and wine-and-cheese parties; the occasional travel that he liked so much, almost always to attend seminars, church conventions, and professional courses. But the bad thing about that good thing was that, when you had so much deductible, you had to spend a lot of time proving it.

Ted Brant was looking at him now, with the expression of a man conscious of a grievance. "I *thought* this session was about the *ruin* of our *marriage*."

"It is, Ted, it is. I'm sorry for the interruption. Still," he said,

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"actually it comes at a good time. I want you to try talking to each other privately about some of the things we've discussed. So I'm going to leave the room for ten minutes. If you don't know what to say, well, Alys, you might go on with what you think about sharing the cooking: that was a good point you made, about your feelings about a dirty kitchen. Don't ever apologize for feelings." He pointed to the wine decanter and the coffee maker. "Help yourself. And have another piece of cake."

In the anteroom, Jessie was cranking the mimeograph machine, counting turns: *Shhlick, shhhlick, shhhlick.* She paused to say, "He's waiting for you in his car, Horny."

"In his *car*?"

"He's a kind of a funny guy, Horny. I don't like him. And, listen, the heat's gone off again. I went down and switched over to methane, but there's no pressure."

"The coal man said he'd come today."

"He never comes till late afternoon. We'll be icicles by then. I'm going to have to use the electric heater."

Hake groaned. The power rationing made life difficult when winter hung on to the end of March, as it was doing this year. The electric company had installed a sealed fuse on the main. It was not supposed to blow out short of thirty amps, but they were not all that accurate. If it did blow out, it meant waiting for a repairman to come from the company, shortly to be followed by the cops with a summons for power-piggery. He said, "If you have to, you have to. But turn off some lights. And go in and turn off the heater in the study. There's enough animal heat in there anyway."

She said virtuously, "I hate to disturb the young folks."

"Sure you do." That was the truth. What she preferred was to listen at the door. He put a sweater on and went out to the porch. The winds were coming straight off the Atlantic, and either surf-spray or a drizzle was blowing in on him.

The rectory was a house a hundred and fifty years old, from the great days of Long Branch when presidents came up to take the summer ocean air (and died there, a couple of them). It was past those days now. The scrollwork on the wooden porch was soft with rot, and the Building Fund never seemed to keep up with replacing the storm windows and the tiles that flew off the roof every time the wind blew. At times it had been a summer home for a wealthy Philadelphia family, a whorehouse, a speakeasy, a dying

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place for old people, a headquarters for the local Ku Klux Klan, eight or ten different kinds of rooming house—and vacant. Lately, mostly vacant. The church bought it at one of those times because it was cheap. If it hadn't had landmark status it would have been pulled down long before, but the Unitarians figured they could get enough volunteer work parties to shore up the fireplaces and put on a new roof and fix the plumbing and throw a coat of paint over the whole thing. Eventually, the paint got on. The rest got patches. Even the paint was beginning to go. The sea wind had scored through the Unitarian green to show speakeasy yellow and whorehouse brown and even traces that might have been original summerhome white.

Hake rested his hand on the rail for the chair-lift, no longer used since his rebirth two years before, and clutched his scarf, looking for his visitor. Among the rubble of street excavation that seemed to be the chronic state of the roadway it was not easy to see all the cars— But then he saw it. No mistake. In a block sparsely lined with three-wheelers and mini-Volkses, it was the only Buick. And four-door at that. *And, if Hake could believe his eyes, it had the motor running.*

Horny Hake had a temper, learned in the free outspoken kibbutz where he had spent his childhood, where if you didn't yell when you were sore no one noticed you were there. He jumped down the steps, flung open the wastefully heavy door, leaned in in, and blazed, "Power pig! Turn off that goddam motor!"

The man at the wheel threw away a cigarette and turned a startled face to him. "Ah, Reverend Hake?"

"Damn right I'm Reverend Hake, whoever the hell you are, and what's this shit about my tax return?" He was shivering, partly from the wind and partly from fury. "And *turn off that motor.*"

"Ah, yes, sir. Of course." He switched off the ignition and began to roll up the window with one hand, trying to stretch to open the door on Horny's side with the other. "Please come in, sir. I'm surely sorry about keeping the motor running, but this weather—"

Hake irritably slid in and shut the door. "All right. What about my taxes?"

The young man struggled to get a wallet out of his hip pocket and extracted a card. "My ID, sir." It read:

T. Donal Corry
Administrative Assistant
Senator Nicholson Bainbridge Watson

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"I thought you were from Internal Revenue," said Hake suspiciously, turning the card over in his hand. It was handsomely engraved and apparently made from virgin linen stock: another kind of piggery!

"No, sir. That statement is, ah inoperative at this point in time."

"Meaning you lied?"

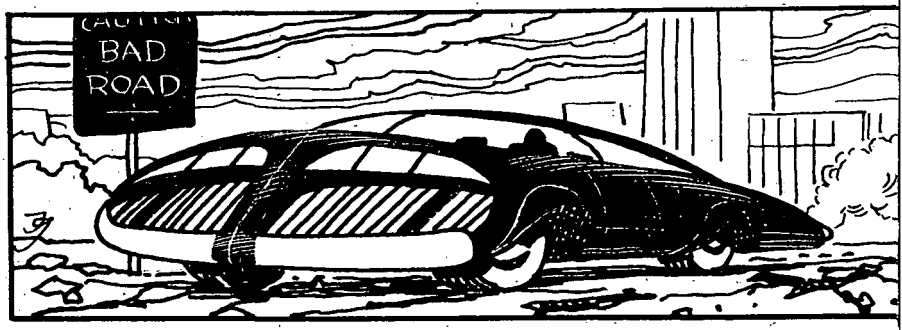
"Meaning, sir, that this is a matter of national security. I did not wish to risk exposing a sensitive matter to your associate, Ms. Tunman, or your counselees."

Horny twisted around in the padded leather seat and stared at Corry. He began mildly enough, but his voice was rising as he finished: "You mean you came up here, stinking up the air in your big-assed Buick, got me out of a counseling session, shook up my secretary that I can't pay enough to afford to antagonize, scared me half to death that I was being audited on my tax return, and all you wanted was to tell me some senator wanted to come up and see me?"

Corry winced. "Yes, sir. I mean, that's about the size of it, Reverend Hake, except that the, ah, senator is not really involved either. That too is inoperative. And he isn't coming here anyway. You're going there."

"I can't just take off and—"

"Yes, you can, Reverend. I've got your travel papers here. The 8:15 to Newark, Metroliner to Washington, you'll be at your destination at a quarter of one and briefing will be completed by two at the latest. Good-by, Reverend Hake." And before Horny knew it, he was outside the car again, and that pestilential eight-cylinder motor had started up and the car roared into an illegal U-turn and away.



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"Are we in trouble, Horny?" Jessie Tunman asked anxiously.

"I don't think so. I mean, I guess it's only routine," he said, roused from abstraction.

"Well, that's good, because we've got enough trouble already. I was just listening to the radio. There's a riot in Asbury Park, and the garbage men just went on strike, so there's going to be methane rationing if they don't get it settled by tomorrow."

"Oh, Lord."

"And I still can't get any heat in here, and you'd better get back inside because I heard them yelling at each other a minute ago."

Hake shook his head mournfully; he had almost forgotten about the marital problems of his parishioners. But they were far more rewarding than his own and less perplexing. He perked up as he went back through the door. "Well," he said. "What have you decided?"

Ted Brant looked around the room and said, "I guess I'll be the one to tell you. Alys definitely wants a divorce."

That was a body blow; Horny had hoped he'd got them reconciled. His voice was angry as he said, "I'm sorry to hear that, Alys. Are you sure? I don't hold marriage as an inviolable sacrament, of course, but my observation is that people who divorce almost always repeat the same sort of marriage with new partners. No better, no worse."

"I'm sure, Horny," said Alys. The reddening of the eyes and the streaks of her makeup showed she had been weeping, but she was composed now.

"Is it Ted?"

"Oh, no."

"Walter?"

"No. It isn't Sue-Ellen, either. They're all just as fine as they

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can be. But not for me. They'll be happier with somebody else, Horny."

Walter Sturgis cried passionately, "We won't, honey! You're everything we want in a wife. The house won't be the same without you."

"I'm sorry, Walter, but I've got to do this."

Sturgis gazed at her with eyes leaking slow tears. He was breathing heavily. "Oh, Horny," he moaned. "I never thought it would end like this. I remember the day I first met Alys."

"Oh, Walter, please don't," she said.

He shook his head. "Ted introduced us. They were recently married, just the two of them. I'd always liked Ted, but I just never thought of a plural marriage with him until I met Alys, so pretty, so *different*. And then when Sue-Ellen came along, we all fitted together. We proposed the day after we met."

"Actually it was about two weeks after we met, dear," said Sue-Ellen with some difficulty. She had been crying too.

"No honey, that was after you and I met; I mean after the two of us met Ted and Alys. Horny," he said despondently, "if Alys won't change her mind I don't know what I'll do. I'll never find another girl like her. And I'm sure I speak for Ted and Sue-Ellen too."

Long after they had gone Horny sat in the gathering darkness, wondering where he had failed. But had it been his failure? Wasn't there something in the essential grinding, grim, grittiness of the world that was destroying social fabrics of more kinds than of marriage? The strikes and the muggings, the unemployment and the inflation, the jolting disappearance of fresh fruits from the stores in summer and Christmas trees in December, the puzzling and permanently infuriating dislocations that had become the central fact of everyone's life—wasn't that where the cause was, and not in his failure?

But the failure felt like his own. And that was almost an attractive thought. He had been a minister long enough to recognize that any insight into guilt was a possible starting place for a sermon theme. He picked up the microphone, thumbed the switch, and started to dictate before he realized the red operation light hadn't gone on.

At the same moment Jessie Tunman opened the door without knocking. "Horny! Did you turn on your heater?"

He looked guiltily down, and there it was. Not glowing. But

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warm and clicking to itself from thermal strain.

"I guess I must have."

"Well, you did it that time. We've blown the input fuse."

"I'm sorry, Jessie. Well, the coal man will be here pretty soon—"

"But then the blower won't work, because there's no power for it, will it? You'll be lucky if the pipes don't freeze, Horny, and as for me, I'm getting cold. I've got to go home."

"But the church newsletter—"

"I'll run it off tomorrow, Horny."

"My sermon! I haven't even started dictating it!"

"You can dictate it tomorrow, Horny. I'll type it up."

"I can't, I have to go—I have to do something else tomorrow."

She looked at him curiously. "Well," she said, puffing her cheeks, "when you get up there Sunday morning maybe you can do a couple of card tricks. I have to go now, or I'll be sick, and then I won't be in tomorrow either."

He watched her zip up her quilted jacket and transfer her spiral silver brooch from blouse to coat. As she was leaving there was someone at the door, and for a moment Horny's hopes ran high—the man from the electric company? Maybe the coal man, maybe them both together? But it was only the policeman with the summons for power piggery. "That's your fifth offense, Reverend," he smirked, blowing into his reddened hands. "Maybe I should just leave a couple of blank ones for you to fill out, save me a trip next time?"

Horny stared at him, big, beefy man with a gay knot on the shoulder of his uniform jacket, leather bracelet at his wrist, American flag in between. He was not the kind of person Horny Hake looked to argue with. A hundred rejoinders rose to his lips, but what came out was, "Thank you, Sergeant. Sure is lousy weather, isn't it?"

II.

He barely made it to the bus station on the boardwalk by 8:15, but then the bus was late. By the time it limped along he had had ten unprotected minutes in the unending bitter wind. The first section of the tandem was full already. He found a seat in the second bus, but that meant sitting next to the charcoal generator, which was old and leaky and backed smoke into the bus every

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time the driver throttled down. He might have slept, but there was the matter of his sermon for the next morning. There was no sense putting it off. He took the lid of his battered portable typewriter, balanced it on his knee, and began to type:

Finding Something to Love in Everyone

Well, that was a start. When you came right down to it, there was something lovable in every human being. Jessie Tunman? She was a hard worker; the world would fall apart without Jessie Tunmans. The coal man, out day after day in every kind of weather, keeping everyone's home warm. Sergeant Moncozzi—he drew a blank on Sergeant Moncozzi, disrupted his chain of thought, sat with his mind skittering in a hundred directions for a minute, and then crossed out what he had written and typed in a new title:

If You Can't Love, Then Tolerate

"Excuse me," said the lady next to him, "are you a writer?"

He looked up at her. She had got on in Matawan, a middle-aged woman with an old-fashioned wedding ring belligerently displayed on her finger, hair an unlikely yellow. "Not exactly," he said.

"I didn't think so," she said. "If you were a real writer you'd be writing instead of just staring at the paper like that."

He nodded and went back to looking out the window. The tandem bus was creaking up the long slope of the Edison Bridge, the motor groaning and faltering to make forty kilometers an hour. It was all right on the straightaway, but on anything more than a three-percent grade it could not even reach the legal limit of eighty. Down below, the river was choked with breaking-up ice laced together with a tangle of northern water hyacinth. A tug was doggedly trying to clear a path for a string of coal barges running upstream.

"When I was a girl," the woman said, leaning across him to peer out the window, "this was all oil tanks." She rubbed a clear spot on the window and scowled at the housing developments. "Dozens of tanks. Big ones. And all full. And refineries, with the flames coming out of the top of them where they were burning the waste gas. Waste gas, young man! They didn't even try to save it.

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Oh, I tell you, we had some good times in 1970."

If You Can't Love, Then Tolerate

Horny said, exercising his tolerance to the full, "I guess there have to be places for the people to live."

"People? Who's talking about people? I mean, where's the oil now, young man? The Communists have it all, what the Jews left us. Wasn't for them, we'd have good times again."

"Well, madam—"

"You know I'm right, don't you? And all this crime and pollution!" She sank back into her seat, neck craned to stare at him triumphantly.

"Crime? I'm not sure I see how crime comes into it."

"Plain as the nose on your face! All these young people with nothing to do! If they had their cars they could ride around with a six-pack and a couple of girls, and who could be happier? Oh, I remember those times, until the Jews spoiled it for all of us."

Horny Hake fought back his temper. She was, of course, referring to the Israeli reprisals against the Arab League, the commando and air attacks that had blasted open every major oilfield in the Near East, causing the Abu Dabu firestorm and a thousand lesser, but immense, blazes. "I don't agree, madam! Israel was fighting for its life."

"And ruining mine! Talk about pollution. Do you know they increased the particulate matter in the air by *seven point two percent*? And it was just to be mean."

"It was to save their lives, madam! It wasn't the Arab armies that put Israel in danger. They proved that six times. It was the Arab oil, and the Arab money!"

She looked at him with dawning comprehension, then sniffed. "You Jewish?" she asked. "I thought so!"

Hake swallowed the answer and turned back to the window, steaming. After a moment he put the lid back on the typewriter, slid it under the seat, closed his eyes, folded his hands, and began practicing his isometric exercises to relax.

The trouble with the question was that it had a complicated answer, and he didn't like her well enough to give it. Hake didn't think of himself as Jewish—well, he wasn't; but it was more complex than that. He didn't think of himself as a minister, either, or at least not the kind of person he had always thought of as a minister, back when he was a kid. Considering how his life had

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changed in the past two years, he wasn't altogether sure who he was. Except that he was himself. Physically he might be somebody new, but inside he was old Horny Hake, whose choices were limited; not too lucky with women, not too financially successful. Maybe not even too bright, at least compared to the bright new kids out of the seminaries. But the center of his personal universe, all the same.

The first memory Horny Hake had of his early life was being carried, hastily and not very carefully, through the wheat fields of his parents' kibbutz. The sprinklers were going, and the sour smell of the grain was heavy in the sodden, sultry air. He was maybe three years old at the time, and it was way past his bedtime.

He woke up with a yell. Something had scared him. It was going right on scaring him: crunching, roaring blasts of sound, people shouting and screaming. He didn't know what it was. Little Horny knew what rocket fire sounded like well enough, because he had heard the kibbutz militia practicing in the fallow fields every week. This was different. He could not identify these terrifying eruptions with the orderly slow fire of the drill. Neither had he heard people shriek in agony and fear when rockets exploded. He began to cry. "Sssh, *bilmouachira*," said whoever was carrying him, gruff, scared, a man's voice. Not his father's. When he realized that neither his mother nor father was with them, that he and the unknown man were all alone, he stopped crying. It was too frightening for tears.

At three he was young enough to be treated still as a baby, too old to like it. He also disliked the physical sensations of where they were; it was unpleasantly hot, but the mist from the sprayers was clammy cold. "Put down, *magboret*!" he yelled, but the man who was carrying him didn't put him down, he clamped a dirty, calloused hand that tasted of grease and salt over Horny's mouth. Then Horny recognized the hand. It was old Ahmet, the Palestinian electrician who ran the milking machines at the kibbutz, and babysat for Horny when his parents flew into Haifa or Tel Aviv for a weekend.

By all rights Horny's life should have ended right there, because the PLO commandos had them dead to rights. What saved them was a diversion. Horny remembered it all his life, a tower of flame that seemed to reach the sky. He got it confused in his mind, as he grew up, with the Abu Dabu fire-storm, when the Israelis dumped their shaped nuclear charge into the oilfields that

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gave the Arabs their muscle. It was impossible, of course. Probably what had actually exploded on the edge of the kibbutz was no more than the tractor gas pumps. But it kept the commandos busy enough for long enough to save his life.

Horny never saw his father again. None of the male militia at Kibbutz Meir survived the first strike. Horny's mother lived, but she was too seriously wounded to go back to farm life. She took the baby and returned to America, lived long enough to marry a widower with five children and bear him Horny's half-sister. It was the best she could do for her son, and it wasn't bad. He grew up in that family in Fair Haven, New Jersey, well cared for and well educated.

That was in the last Arab-Israeli war, the fourth after Yom Kippur, the second after the Bay of Sharks, the one that settled things forever. Growing up after it, Horny had been alternately full of resolve to return and build up Israel again (but Israel did fine without him) and determination to help his new country as a thermodynamic engineer, able to solve the problems of wiped-out oil reserves. It didn't work out that way. It might have, if he hadn't spent so much of his childhood in a wheelchair. But after four years of MIT he began to perceive that technology didn't seem to deal with the kind of problems people came to him with: as an invalid, the young man was a repository for all confidences, and he found he liked it. The next step was the seminary, and he wound up a Unitarian minister.

He had not married. Not because he was in a wheelchair; oh, no, any number of young women had made it perfectly clear that that wouldn't stop *them*. At the seminary he had paid a shrink for a dozen 50-minute hours to find out, among other things, why that was. He was not sure he had had his money's worth. It seemed to have something to do with pride. But why that much pride? He had learned that he was full of unresolved conflicts. He hated Arabs, who had killed his father, and ultimately his mother too. But the man who hid him out in the wheat and saved his life was also an Arab, whom he loved. He had been brought up as a Jew, a non-religious Jew, to be sure, but in an atmosphere saturated with dreidels and Chanukkah candles. But both his parents had been born Protestants, one side Lutheran and the other Methodist, who had happened to admire the kibbutz lifestyle and been accepted as volunteers in the exciting years when all the second-generation kibbutzim were flocking to the cities and the agro-industrial settlements were desperate for warm bodies.

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So he wound up a minister in a Unitarian church in Long Branch, New Jersey, between a pizzeria and a parking lot, and all in all he liked it well enough. At least until the last operation, two years before, that had changed things around.

Now he was not really sure what he liked. What he disliked was clear enough. He disliked crime, and filth, and poverty, and meanness; and most of all he disliked bigots like the woman beside him. He maintained silence all the way to Newark, where he got out while the bus driver stood in the doorway with his shotgun until all the passengers were safely inside the terminal, just in time to catch the Metroliner to Washington.

The Metroliner was a four-bus string, with a pilot, co-pilot, stewardess and conductor. From the outside it looked glittering and new. Inside, not quite so new. For one thing, in the coach section to which his tickets entitled him, three of the windows were stuck open. For another the woman from the Long Branch bus followed him aboard, evidently anxious to renew the conversation.

For the first twenty miles Hake tried to feign sleep, but it was hard going. Not only was the window behind him open, but for some reason the air-conditioning was full on and icy drafts caught him in the temple every time he leaned back and closed his eyes.

At the rest stop at the Howard Johnson's outside Philadelphia, he got out, went to the men's room, came out and stood gloomily surveying the Philadelphia Slag Bank until the pilot tapped his horn impatiently. He leaped in at the last minute, followed closely by a girl in a denim zipper-suit, who gave him a surprisingly inviting smile. The smile collapsed when he sat down in the front seat, next to a large black woman counting rosary beads. The girl hesitated, then went back to the next vacant seat, and gratefully Hake fell asleep.

He woke up quite a long time later realizing that someone was talking to him in a penetrating whisper. ". . . to bother you, but it's important. Would you please come to the toilet with me?"

He sat up suddenly and looked around, feeling frowsty with sleep and somewhat irritable. His black neighbor was gone, replaced by a Puerto Rican woman holding a baby with one hand and a copy of *El Diario* in the other.

The voice came from behind him; he turned and met the eye of the girl in the zip-suit.

"Turn back!" she whispered tensely. "Don't look at me!"

Confused, he followed orders. Her whisper reached him. "I think

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you're being watched and I don't want any trouble. So what I'll do is I'll go back in the toilet. Nobody pays much attention to that. The one on the left; it's got a broken seat so nobody uses it much. Will you?"

Hake started to ask what for, but swallowed it. He said instead, "Where are we?"

"About half an hour out of Washington. Come on, tiger, I won't hurt you."

"I have to get out pretty soon," Hake said. "I mean, I'm not going all the way into Washington—"

"Will you please come back and quit arguing? Look, I'm going back to the toilet now. Wait one minute. Then you just get up and stroll back and come right in. I'll leave the door unlatched. There's plenty of room, I already checked it."

"Lady," said Hake, "I don't know exactly what's happening, but please leave me alone."

"Oaf!"

"I'm sorry."

She whispered angrily, "You don't even know why I want you to come back there, do you?"

He paused, surprised. "I don't? Well, then, I guess I don't."

"So *come*. It's important." And she got up, turned around in the aisle, looking at him, and went toward the back. No one was looking, having reached the terminal phase of mass transit where they were asleep or engrossed in what they were doing or cataleptic.

For a moment Horny Hake seriously thought of following her, just on the chance that it would be interesting. She really was rather a nice-looking woman, years younger than he was but not so young as to be embarrassing. There really was very little chance that she intended to cut his throat or infect him with a communicable disease. He didn't have a lot to lose, thought Hake; but just at that moment the bus slowed and the driver leaned over, eyes still on the road. "Here's your stop," he called.

Would have been interesting; should have taken a chance, thought Hake, but that's the story of my life. As he got out of the Metroliner, at a private driveway marked Lo-Wate Bottling Co., Inc., he looked back and saw the girl emerging hurriedly from the toilet, staring at him with resentment and rage.

Hake opened his sealed instructions and read them again to make sure:

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Debus at Lo-Wate Bottling Co. entrance. Proceed on foot ¼ mi. to entrance marked Visitors. State name to receptionist and follow her instructions.

It was clear enough. The building marked **Visitors—Market Analysis—Sales & Promotion** was two-story, ivy-covered, a veteran of the decentralization years of the '60s and '70s, but well maintained. The receptionist was a young man who listened as Hake told his name and said, "May I see your travel orders?" He did not trouble to read them, but put them, backside up, under a hooded bulb that emitted a faint bluish gleam under the skirts of the hood. What the receptionist saw Horny could not see, but evidently it was satisfactory. "The gentlemen with whom you have an appointment will see you in about ten minutes," he said. "Please be seated."

It was almost exactly ten minutes, by Hake's watch. The receptionist had been nice enough to let him use the waiting-room john—he hadn't dared, in the bus, although the girl had put the idea strongly in his mind with her talk. Then the receptionist beckoned to him and said, "The gentleman with whom you have an appointment will see you now. This lady will escort you there. Please follow the following instructions. Walk ten paces behind your escort. Do not look into any offices. Check any camera, film, microphones, or recording devices here. If you have any undeveloped film of magnetic tape of any kind it will be damaged."

"I don't have anything like that," said Hake.

The young man nodded, unsurprised. Thinking it over, Hake remembered the thirty-second pause in the vestibule on the way in, waiting for the automatic door to open; no doubt at the same time capacitators probed for metal on his person.

His escort was a little old lady, motherly and smiling, who tottered along at slow-march, crying in a thin, piercing voice: "Uncleared personnel coming through! Uncleared personnel coming through!" Hake didn't look into the offices because he was getting the uneasy feeling that something was going on that had high stakes involved and orders had better be followed; but he was aware of a rustling of papers being covered and charts being turned to the wall from every doorway they passed.

It did not surpirse him that "Lo-Wate Bottling Co." was some sort of government installation. Even if he had not expected it, "follow the following instructions" would have been a dead giveaway.

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All the walls were bare, except for what looked like ventilators but might have concealed surveillance equipment; government-issue cream-colored paint; no windows visible anywhere. Hake wondered about the outside of the building. Surely there had been windows in it? But maybe they were dummies.

The motherly woman reached her destination. It was a closed door that bore a frame for a nameplate, but instead of a name it had a number: T-34. The guide carefully checked it against a card in her hand, knocked twice and waited. When the door opened she carefully averted her eyes and said, staring at the ceiling, "The gentleman with whom the gentleman had an appointment is here."

Hake walked in and shook the hand of the gentleman, accepted a seat and a cigarette, and waited.

The gentleman slung himself into a fat leather chair behind a steel drawerless desk, and lit a cigarette of his own. He was short, slim and hairy: not only a Waspro that fluffed out in all directions, but a sloppy beard and sideburns. His general appearance was not of a man who had decided to grow long hair and facial hair, but of someone who simply stopped doing anything about it at some remote point in time. He wore chinos and an Army battle jacket, without insignia, over a blue work shirt open at the throat; and around his waist he had a gunbelt with a holstered .45.

"I imagine," he said, "you're wondering what you're doing here, Horny."

Horny let out a long breath. "You are very right about that, Mr.—"

The man waved a hand. "My name doesn't matter. I suppose you've already figured out that this is some kind of cockamamie cloak-and-dagger operation. If you haven't, you're pretty dumb. So we don't give real names to people like you, but you can call me—" He paused to lift a corner of one of the papers on his desk. "—ah, yes. You can call me 'Curmudgeon'."

"Curmudgeon?"

"Don't ask me why, I don't decide these things. Now, the first thing we have to do is recall you to active service. Please stand up and repeat the oath."

"Hey! Hey, wait a minute. I'm thirty-nine years old and draft-proof, and besides I'm a minister."

"Oh, yes, you certainly are. You're also a fellow who took ROTC in college, right?"

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"Now, that's ridiculous! I wasn't *really* in Rotsy. I was in a wheelchair. It was just some kind of public relations thing, for extra credit—"

"But you took the oath, and when you signed up you signed for twenty years in the Reserve. And that hasn't changed, has it? So stand up."

"No," said Horny, for whom things were going much too fast. "I mean, can't you let me know what this is all about first? I guess it's some kind of CIA thing, but—"

"Oh, Horny, you're tiresome. Look. The CIA was disbanded years ago, after the Watergate scandals. Didn't you know that? There's no such thing any more."

"Then what—"

The man stood up, and suddenly looked a lot taller. He said in a flat voice, "You have two choices, Hake. Take the oath or go to jail for evasion of service. That's only a five-year sentence, but they'll be hard years, Hake, they'll be very hard years. And then we'll think of something else."

It took about three seconds for Horny Hake to catalogue his alternate choices and realize that he didn't have any; reluctantly and sullenly he stood up and repeated the oath nicely.

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"Now, that's much better," the man said warmly. "The first thing I have to do is give you three orders. Remember them, Horny. You can't write them down, but I'm recording the orders and your responses—which, in each case, are to be, 'I understand and will comply.' Got it? All right, first order: This project and your participation in it are top secret and are not to be discussed with anyone at any time without the specific authorization of me or whoever replaces me in the event I die or am removed. Got that?"

"I guess so—"

"No, that's not it. 'I understand and will comply.' "

"I understand and will comply," said Hake thoughtfully.

"Second order: The declassification of any material relating to this project can be only at my explicit order in writing, or that of my successor. It is without time limit. You are bound to it for the rest of your life. Okay?"

"Right," said Hake dismally. "I—"

"Wrong. 'I understand—' "

"All right. I understand and will comply."

"Third: This security classification also applies to the fact that you are recalled to active duty. You may not inform anyone of this."

"What am I supposed to tell my church?" Hake demanded. The man wagged his head. "Oh, all right: I understand and will comply. But what *am* I supposed to tell them?"

"You're very sick, Horny," he said sympathetically. "You have to take time off."

"But I can't just leave—"

"Certainly not. We'll supply you with a replacement. And," he went on, "there are certain advantages to this from your point of view. For payroll procedures, you will be placed on retainer by Lo-Wate as a consultant at an annual salary equal to a G-16—which, if you don't know, is currently about $83,000 a year, counting bonuses and cost-of-living. That's—let's see—" He took a note book out of his inside shirt pocket. "—looks like better than thirty thousand more than you're making now from your church."

"But I like being a minister!" Even as he was saying the words, he felt their total irrelevance. "Why me?" he burst out.

"Ah," said the man, all sympathy, "how many people have asked the question? Men dying on a battlefield. Girls being raped. Children with leukemia. Of course," he said, "in your case it's a little easier to explain. We put through a sort for persons on ac-

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tive service or capable of being activated, at least twenty but no more than forty-five, of Middle Eastern but non-Jewish and non-Moslem extraction. I guess there weren't all that many, Horny. Then we evaluated in point scores. Point scores," he said confidentially, "usually means that we don't really know who we want. We figure out a couple of things—Eastern-Mediterranean languages, knowing the customs of the area, free of obligations that would interfere with leaving for parts unknown for prolonged periods. That sort of thing. And you won, Horny, fair and square."

"You want me to go be a spy in the Middle East?"

He coughed. "Well, that's the funny part. It says here your first mission will be in France, Norway, and Denmark. It's a strange thing," he said philosophically, "but every once in a while the system screws up. Well. It's nice talking to you, but you've got two other people to see before you leave. Let me have you taken to your next appointment."

The next person was a plump and rather pretty woman, who said at once, "How much history do you know?"

"Well—"

"I don't mean Romans and the Dukes of Burgundy, I mean over the last couple of decades. For instance. Why hasn't there been a shooting war in the last twenty years?"

Well, he knew the answer to that. No one had the heart for a shooting war any more, not since the brief, violent bloodbaths that had splashed up and smeared twenty small countries in a couple of decades. For one thing, they were bad for business. Oil roared with pain when the Israelis demolished the Arab fields. Steel screamed under the squeeze of price-fixing. Banking wept under currency controls.

"I would say," he began judiciously, "that it's because—"

"It's because it's too dangerous," she said. "Nobody wins a war any more—if the enemy knows a war is going on."

"I beg your pardon?"

"There are two ways to win a race, Hake. One is to beat your opponent by sheer force. The other is to trip him up. They're playing trip-him-up with us. Why do you think we're so short of energy in this country?"

"Well, because the world is running out of—"

"Because they manipulate our balance of payments, Hake. The mark is up to three dollars, did you know that? And what about crime?"

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"Crime?"

"You've heard of crime, haven't you? It's not safe to walk the streets of any city in America today. Even our highways aren't safe, there are bus robbers in every state. Do you know why you can't get an avocado for love of money? Because somebody—*some*body!—deliberately brought in insect pests that—"

Horny said, "I think you jumped over something about crime. I didn't quite get that part."

"It's plain, Hake! Somebody's encouraging this lawlessness. Cheap Spanish and Algerian porno flicks that show muggers and highwaymen doing it to all the girls. They *look* crude. But, oh, how carefully engineered! War is not all bombs and missiles, my boy. It's hurting the other fellow any way you can. And if you can hurt him so he can't prove it's happening, why, that's one for your side. And that's what they're doing to us, Hake. Here, have a look at this tape." And she threaded a cassette into a viewer.

Horny stared at it, bemused. It started way back, back before the Big Wars entirely. The peace-loving British had pioneered in this immoral equivalent for war as far back as the nineteenth century: they found a good way to discourage resistance in subject populations by encouraging them to trip out on opium. America itself had exported cigarettes and Coca-Cola around the world. Now, according to the tape, it was becoming state policy, and William James was turning in his grave. China flooded the Soviet Union with Comecon vodka at half the market price. It was not a weapon. No one died. But twenty percent of the steelworkers in Magnetogorsk were absent with hangovers on an average working day. Tokyo flooded the Marianas with cheap, high-quality sukiyaki noodles, reminding the voters of their ancestry just before the referendum that rejoined the islands to Japan. During the London water shortage just before the completion of the Rape of Scotland waterworks, Irish nationalists went around turning on hydrants and covert sympathizers left their taps running. It worked so well that Palestinian refugees, trained for the occasion, repeated the process in Haifa to such an extent that two hundred thousand acres of orange groves died for lack of irrigation.

By now it had all become well institutionalized, and wholly secret. Everybody did it. Nobody talked about it.

Horny Hake was horrified. As soon as he began to understand the thrust of what he was being shown he burst out, "But that's *animal*. Wars are supposed to be all over!"

The woman put the cover over her projector and sighed, "Go

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through that door, there's somebody who wants to study you."

The somebody turned out to be a sandy-haired young man with spectacles, who looked a little like Hake. "Jim Jackson," he said, standing up. "I'm your replacement."

"Replacement for what? " Hake demanded.

"You're going on a sabbatical," said Jackson, watching Hake thoughtfully. "Right word?"

"Sabbatical? It's a minister's vacation. I thought I was supposed to be sick."

"Oh, shit," said Jackson crossly, "have they changed it again? Well, anyway, I'm going to take over for you while you're on active duty."

Hake looked at him jealously. "Are you a minister?"

"I'm whatever they tell me to be," Jackson shrugged. "They say, 'You're an account executive' or 'You're a TV producer', and I do it. You'd be surprised how easy it is when you're a boss. When somebody else is boss it's harder, but I manage. Sometimes I screw up but usually nobody notices."

Hake was horrified. "A minister has a tough job! How can you possibly take over a congregation?"

"Oh, I think it'll work out," said Jackson. "They told me this might be coming up so I went to a church last Sunday. Doesn't look so hard. I picked up a batch of mimeographed sermons on my way out that ought to keep me going for the first few weeks anyway. Of course," he said, "that was a Baptist church and I understand you're Congregational. Or something like that that. I suppose there are doctrinal differences, but I'll manage. I already checked out some books from the library: oldies but goodies like *On Being a Woman* and stuff by Janov and Perls. What else do you do?"

"Counseling," said Hake immediately. "The sermon's nothing by comparison. All the people in the church can come to me with their problems, any time."

"And you solve them?"

"Well," said Hake, "no, I don't always *solve* them. That's a sort of structured old-fashioned kind of way to look at it. You can't *force* solutions on people. They have to generate their own solutions."

"How do you get them to do that?"

"I listen," Hake said promptly. "I let them talk, and when they come to the place where the pain is I ask them what they think

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they could do about it. Of course there are some failures, but mostly they perceive what they have to do."

Jackson nodded, unsurprised. "That's how I handled it when I was a judge, too," he remarked. "Get the two lawyers into chambers and ask them not to waste my time, tell me what they *really* think I should do and they'd almost always tell me. I hated to give that one up, to tell you the truth."

By the time the little old lady returned to conduct Hake out into the real world he was reconciled to the fact that this fantasy had forced itself into reality. Incredibly, he was about to become a spy in a war that he had not even known was going one. *Mad*!, he thought, following the lady's leper cry down the hall, while the offices around him slammed doors and bustled with the hiding of secrets from his eyes-front gaze. *Mad*!

He waited by the side of the road for his bus to pick him up. It was wholly mad, but interesting; Hake found himself accepting it as a sort of lunacy high. At least for some time he would not have to worry about blowing his overload fuse or dealing with Jessie Tunman's temper.

Viewed as madness, i.e., as a sort of penalty-free vacation from the irritating world of objective reality, it was exciting and almost pleasurable. Anything might happen. He was not even surprised when, instead of the bus, a three-wheeled telephone company repair truck whined to a halt in front of him. Not even when the double doors in the side opened, revealing four men, two of whom held guns on him while the other two jumped down, grabbed him and threw him inside.

Wherever they went, Hake was not allowed to see outside the truck until it stopped and, polite and unviolent now, the men led him into a normal-looking split-level ranch house in the decrepit style of sixty years before. It did not astonish him that the girl from the bus was there.

They moved him like a puppet, talked about him as though he weren't there. "Search him," said the girl, and one man held him while another expertly turned out his pockets. The holding wasn't necessary. Horny had no intention of resisting while the two other men still had their guns pointed in his direction. "Give me the stuff," she said.

"Bunch of junk, Lee."

"Give it to me anyway." She filled her cupped hands with the

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litter from his pockets. It was not very impressive. Wallet, return ticket on the Metroliner, keys with a rabbit's-foot chain, summons for power-piggery, the folded sheets that were supposed to be his sermon—

"Hey," he said. "Where's my typewriter?"

The girl looked furiously at one of the men, who ventured, "I guess we left it in the truck."

"Get it! Bring it in the kitchen. You keep an eye on him, Richy." And the man with the bigger gun pushed him face down on a lumpy couch, while the girl and the other two retired from the room. The couch smelled of generations of use, and when Hake tried to move his face away from it the man called Richy warned, "Don't try it, pal."

"I'm not trying anything." Stubbornly, Hake kept his face averted. Now he could see the room, though there was not much to study. It was dark because the picture window had been covered long since with translucent, then opaque, plastic to conserve heat. Which he could have wished they had conserved better because, now that he was not moving, he was cold. In the feeble light from two candles Hake worked at trying to memorize Richy's face. A perfectly ordinary face, youngish, with a red-brown beard. He wondered if he would be able to identify it in a police lineup, and then wondered if he would live to try. Although he was past being surprised, he was not past being scared, and this was beginning to scare him.

"Bring him in," called the girl.

"Right, Lee. Get up, you." Horny let himself be shoved into the kitchen. It was brighter than the other room, but smelled, if anything, even worse, as though the ghost of long-dead garbage-disposal units had left their greasy deposits to sour in the drain.

The girl was sitting on the edge of a chrome and plastic kitchen table, older than she was. "Well, Reverend H. Hornswell Hake," she said, "do you want to tell us who you really are?"

It caught him by surprise. "That's who I am," he protested.

She shook her head reproachfully. "You a minister? Cripes. Worst cover I ever saw." She poked through the litter on the table: his papers and his typewriter, opened, with the roller lifted out and inches of the ribbon unrolled; to look for microfilms, maybe? "Look at this driver's license! It's dated three days ago. Real amateurish. Anybody would have known to backdate it a year or two, so it wouldn't look so phony."

"But that's when it had to be renewed. Honest, that's me. Horny

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Hake. I'm minister of the Unitarian Church in Long Branch, New Jersey. Have been for years."

Richy nudged him with the gun into an aluminum-tube chair. "I suppose you've never heard of yo-yos," he sneered.

"Yo-yos?"

"Or hula hoops. Don't even know what they are, do you?"

"Well, sure I do. Everybody does."

"And you know about them better than other people because you're a toy designer, right? Don't crap us, Hake, or whatever your name is. What we want to know is, what kind of toys are you exporting these days?"

Hake sat and blinked up at them, silent because he could not think of any answer that he was sure he should make. Except, "I don't know what you're talking about."

Lee sighed and took over. "Just start out by admitting you're a toy designer, why don't you? In fact," she said helpfully, "that would be smart, don't you see? If you don't admit that much you'll cause curiosity, which would lead people to suspect that some security matter is involved."

"But I'm not! I'm a minister!"

"Oh, God, Hake, you're such a pain." She glanced morosely toward the bigger of the armed men, who was standing by the door with a .32 automatic hanging loosely from his hand in an ostentatious kind of way. It had a long tube attached to it that Hake supposed to be a silencer. That was also ostentatious, as well as highly unpleasant.

"Want me to try with him?" the .32-automatic man rumbled.

"Not yet. Not unless he keeps this up. Listen, Hake," she said, "I can see you're new at this game. Damn Agency, they don't give you proper briefing. Let me tell you the rules, all right?"

"Would you tell me the name of the game, too?"

"Don't be a wise-ass. Here's how it's supposed to go. We've kidnaped you, so obviously we're breaking the law. You're okay as far as the law goes, but you don't want to stay kidnaped. Got it so far? That's the first level of meaning to what's happening here. Now, on the second level, let's say you're really just an ordinary toy designer—"

"I'm not!"

"Oh, shut up, will you? Let me finish. Say you're a toy designer, and you never heard of the Lo-Wate Bottling Company, alias the Agency. Why do you think we kidnaped you? You might suspect we're from Mattell, or say Sears, Roebuck or somebody, maybe.

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Just plain old industrial espionage, you know, trying to get your new designs. A little rougher than most. But still just commercial, right? Well, in that case there's a special way you should act. You should cooperate with us. Why? Because your boss wouldn't expect you to, for God's sake, risk your *life* just to protect a new yo-yo design, even if you were expecting to ship a hundred million of them to the Soviet Union. Go it so far? There's a limit to what you should put up with just keep the new fall line from a competitor."

"Well, that's probably true, but—"

"No, Hake, no 'but' yet. That's if you're just a toy designer, really. But now let's go to the third level. Let's suppose you're a toy designer who is actually working for the cloak-and-dagger boys. Let's say you know these yo-yos carry a subsonic whistle that drives people crazy when their kids play with them. Not fatal. Just enough to make them tense and irritable. Let's say you've figured out that the adult hula hoops are going to cause more slipped disks and sacroiliac disorders than the Soviet economy can put up with—just for instance, right? So what do you do in that case? Why, you act just the way you would on the second level, because you wouldn't want us to know you weren't just an ordinary toy designer. What you *don't* do, on either level, is lie to us about that; that's why we brought you here," she explained.

"But I'm still on the first level! I'm a minister!"

"What rot," she said scornfully. "And next you're going to tell me you went to the Agency headquarters just to get a diet cola?"

"Well," he said uncomfortably, and stopped.

"You see? You can't even give me a straight answer that's a lie! Very bad briefing they gave you!"

Hake had to agree that he couldn't give her an answer—not any answer at all, not after Curmudgeon's very explicit orders. But he agreed silently. It was a pity no one had explained to him what to do in a case like this. Where were the poison capsules in the false teeth, or the secret radio that would alert Headquarters and bring a hundred agents slinking in to save him?

The girl was waiting for an answer. He said desperately, "All I can tell you is the truth. The papers you have tell it the way it is. I'm a Unitarian minister. Period."

"No, Hake," she said angrily, "not period. What would a minister be doing where we picked you up?"

"Ah, well, " he said guardedly, "yes, I was asked to come there."

"To talk about toys for Russia!"

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"No! Nobody said a word about toys!"

"Then why were you there?"

"My God, don't you think I wish I knew? All they said was they wanted somebody with a Near East background who wouldn't be missed if anything went—" Belatedly he clamped his lips together.

His captors were looking at each other. "Near East?"

"It isn't the first time that source got it wrong."

"You think—?"

"So maybe this one isn't the toyman," said the man with the .32.

The girl nodded slowly. "So maybe we're into something entirely different."

"So maybe it's time for Phase Two," said the gunman.

"Yeah. Tell you what, Hake," she said, turning back to him. "That sort of changes things, doesn't it? I guess we've made some kind of mistake. Here, have some coffee while we figure out what to do next."

He accepted the cup morosely. The four of them withdrew to the other room and whispered together, glancing through the doorway at him from time to time. He could not hear what they were saying. It did not seem to matter. Let them conspire; there was nothing he could do about it, except to let it happen. Even the coffee was not very good, though not as bad as his precarious situation. These people did not seem like very expert kidnapers or spies or whatever they were; but how much expertise did you need to pull the trigger on a gun? He took another sip of the coffee—

As he was lifting the cup for a third sip, it belatedly occurred to him that it might not be wise to drink something just because it said "Drink Me." Poison, truth serum, knockout drops— But that was two sips too late. The cup dropped out of his hand, and his head dropped to meet the typewriter case on the table.

When he woke up the typewriter was in his lap, and none of them were anywhere in sight.

He was in the Metroliner, heading back to Newark. Across the aisle two tiny, elderly ladies were staring at him. "He's sobering up," said one loudly.

Equally loudly the other one replied, "Disgusting! If I were his wife I wouldn't have helped him on the bus, I'd've just let him rot there. And serve him right."

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III.

The next morning the sermon went beautifully. "So fresh and enlightening," said the president of the congregation, wringing his hand. He didn't have the heart to tell her that she had heard him give the same sermon, word for word, two years before. He didn't have the head for it, either, because the only head he had was throbbing violently. Whatever had been in the coffee had given him the finest hangover he had ever owned, and without even a night's drinking to justify it. It had to have been a truth drug, he decided. They wouldn't have let him go until they were quite sure he had nothing worth telling to tell them—and, when you came down to it, he didn't.

The coffee hour after the service was pure pain, but there was no way out of it. He didn't always hear what was said to him. But reflexes took over:

"So glad you liked it."

And meanwhile his mind, between thuds of pain, was considering the world about him in a new light. The game the Agency was asking him to join—was it being played all around him? That raft of water lilies that floated in every river: was that just a freak of nature, or were other nations playing that game against his own?

"Horny, the methane-burner's acting up again."

"I'm so pleased you liked it."

He thought of all the power blackouts that had hit in the past few years. Defective switches, overstressed transformers? Or somebody helping the accidents along? He recalled the dozen petty pandemics of coughs and trots, the strikes, the walkouts. The incredibly detailed rumors of corruption in high places, and perverse orgies of the powerful that had turned half the country off to its elected officials. All of them! How many were thrown up by chance? How many were calculated strategies devised in Moscow or Peiping, or even Ottawa?

"Horny, I want to thank you for all of us. We've decided to give the marriage another chance."

"I'm glad you enjoyed—oh, Alys! Yes. What did you say?"

"I said you've made us want to try again, Horny."

"That's really fine. Yes." As she started to move off he detained her; she was one of the brightest of the parishioners, with a doctoral degree, he remembered, in history. "Alys," he said, "how would you go about researching some recent events?"

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"What kind of recent events, Horny?"

"Well—I don't know exactly how to describe them." He pondered for a moment, and then offered: "It seems to me that everything has got kind of, you know, shitty over the last few years. Like the lilies that are clogging up the water intakes for all those cities in the north. Where did they come from?"

"I think they were first reported in Yugoslavia," she said helpfully. "Or was it Ireland?"

"Well, that sort of thing. If I made up a list of say thirty things that are going on that, uh, that seem to damage the quality of life, how would I go about seeing where they started, and what sort of correlations there are, and so on?"

She pursed her lips, fending off a couple of other parishioners pressing toward them. "I suppose you're researching a sermon?"

"Something like that," he lied.

"I thought so." She nodded. "Well, for openers, there's the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. And *Current Topics*. Then you might want to look at the New York *Times* microfilms, with the subject index. I'm afraid you'd have to go to New York for some of the stuff. Unless—" She looked carefully at his face. "Unless you'd like me to help you with it?"

"Would you? I'd really appreciate that."

"Why, certainly, Horny," she said, impulsively pressing his arm. "I'll come around tomorrow to talk to you about it. You've been so good to all of us, why, I couldn't deny you anything at all!" She leaned forward and kissed his cheek before she turned away.

It almost seemed that the headache was less, Hake thought gratefully. He did not think Curmudgeon would approve, but he needed to know what was going on. And with a trained researcher to help him, maybe he could find out.

On the steps of the church, a gray-haired man whose name he could not quite place stopped him and said: "Reverend Hake, may I have a word with you?"

"I'm so glad you enjoyed the sermon."

"Well, uh, yes, I did. But that wasn't what I was going to ask you. You see, I'm with International Pets and Flowers. We're expanding our operations here in New Jersey. I don't know whether you've heard of it, but we've acquired the old Fort Monmouth tract, and we like to have responsible local representation on our district Board of Directors in a thing like this. Could you accept a directorship?"

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"Directorship? I'm sorry, Mr.—"

"Haversford, Reverend Hake. Allen Haversford."

"Well, I appreciate the offer, Mr. Haversford. Did you say pets and flowers? I'm afraid I don't know very much about pets and flowers. And my time—"

"No special knowledge is needed, Reverend Hake. It's a question of community welfare; we want your inputs on the way we can help carry our share of the load."

"Yes, I see that, but I'm very—"

"I know your time is at a premium, but it is quite a useful service you could do. And there's a tiny honorarium, of course. Ten thousand dollars. But the important thing is that I'm sure you could be of great help to us, and we to your church. Please say yes."

"Ten thousand dollars a *year*?"

"Oh, no. The honorarium is ten thousand dollars per meeting. There is usually one meeting each quarter—sometimes special ones, of course, when some decision is needed quickly, but they are usually quite brief. You'll do it? Thank you so much, Reverend. The other members of the Board will be very pleased."

Horny stared after Haversford, his head forgetting to ache. Forty thousand dollars a year, *plus*. And a community service too! As he turned toward the rectory he was thinking of what he could do with an extra forty thousand dollars a year when he caught sight of the Brant-Sturgis family. Walter Sturgis was turning the crank of the compressor of their charcoal-burner van, while the two women sat stiffly inside, red-eyed or brightly and sadistically cheerful, according to their private ways of expressing stress. Ted Brant was standing at the curb, glowering at him.

That almost brought the headache back. For the moment Hake had forgotten how jealous Ted was.

Horny had made it Rule Number One to avoid sexual entanglements within his congregation, or with other people with whom he associated in his professional capacity. Considering that Hake's 24-hour days allowed six hours of sleep and eighteen hours in contact with some member or another of his congregation—or some person who was off limits for equally valid reasons, like the wife of another minister in the Regional Confraternity or his fellow members of the Right to Abort committee—that meant he avoided sexual entanglements just about completely. It wasn't that he wanted it that way. Sometimes he didn't even think he could stand it that way. But he knew what happened to other

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ministers when they departed from that golden rule. He was the only bachelor in Monmouth County who never missed a meeting of the Interfaith Singles Club—and who never failed to go home alone, usually after everyone else had left because he stacked the chairs and emptied the ashtrays to ready the room for its next use. His vacation weeks gave him the only romantic interludes of life. And there weren't many of them. Weren't nearly enough.

But the last thing he was willing to accept was any share in the probable collapse of the precarious Brant-Sturgis marriage. Before he went to sleep that night he had typed out a careful list of subjects for Alys to look up for him, and left the envelope on Jessie Tunman's desk clipped to a scrap of paper that said only HO-DWS. Jessie was not terribly smart or efficient, and she did talk a lot. But she knew what he meant by Hand Over—Don't Want to See, and would abide by it.

As it happened, in the morning he almost forgot that Alys Brant existed. He had gone to sleep with the power still off in the rectory, and what woke him was a sudden glare of light in his eyes and the creaking hum of his bedside electric heater going on. When he went down to the basement to investigate, the man from the electric company was working over the meter box. "Putting a new fuse in?" Hake asked.

The man looked up and grinned enviously. "Hell, no, Reverend—excuse me. I'm taking the fuse out. Didn't you know? You're off fusing from now on. Seems you've got your own generator coming in, and we'll be buying from you part of the time, so you're no longer subject to rationing."

"My *what*?"

"Your new generator. It's a wind generator, go on top of your house. Should be coming in today, I guess—anyway we got a priority-rush order this morning. So you can draw up to full capacity, which is rated at six hundred amps, according to your specs plate here."

"I don't know anything about a wind-power generator!"

"Yeah, well, that's the way it goes," the man sympathized. "Your wife said she had some letter about it."

Hake repressed the urge to explain that Jessie Tunman wasn't his wife, and went to find the letter. It was on the stationery of something called The Fund for Clerical Fellowship, and it said:

Dear Reverend Hake:

We are pleased to inform you that our Board has

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granted your Church a beneficence for the purpose of installing generating facilities for your rectory.

Accordingly, we have ordered a Model (x)A-40 Win-Tility unit, with necessary mounts and electrical connections, and have secured the services of William S. Murfree & Co., Belmar, to effect the installation.

If there is any further way in which we can serve your Church, please advise us.

It was signed by a scribble, but Hake didn't need the name to know who it came from. He was being well taken care of, just as promised. But why the generator?

A thought struck him, and he spent the next half hour snooping around his office and bedroom, looking for bugs. He didn't find any.

That set him back in his thinking. It was a letdown. It was almost a disappointment, because if they were bugging him they were automatically providing him with a means of communication. He wanted one. That wasn't the same as saying that he had made up his mind to use it. He was still thinking about that, but he wanted the option. There was nagging at him the thought that he should somehow report his kidnaping. If he had been able to find a bug he could have just said it out loud: "Hey, Curmudgeon! I got kidnaped. Somebody's broken my cover. Give me a call when you get a chance, why don't you, and we'll talk about it over lunch."

But he hadn't found a bug, and that was confusing. If the Agency was not supplying him with power just so they could be sure of monitoring everything he did, then maybe his whole attitude was wrong. Maybe they were really kindly and protective, and simply providing fringe benefits for a new recruit. Maybe his negative feelings were not to be trusted.

Or maybe he just hadn't looked hard enough.

Now that he had heat the weather had turned mild. When he took his morning run, a mile down the beach to the pier and a mile back, he was panting and pouring sweat, and as he came up over the boardwalk he saw Alys Brant's three-wheeled van sitting crookedly outside the rectory. At least she'd left it running. But he skulked behind the rail for five minutes before she came out and drove away, and by then he was chilled and sodden.

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Still—what was the use of having privileges if you didn't use them? He stripped off the suit and flung it carelessly in the washer-dryer, hoping that it still remembered how to work, and treated himself to a long, hot shower. No doubt about it. Power-piggery could make you feel good. He hit the morning's mail joyously, disposed of it in half an hour, got his expense account up to date, wrote a marriage ceremony for two young members of his congregation ("I, Arthur, take thee, James as long as love shall endure—"), telephoned every sick parishioner and promised to visit two of them and even had time for twenty minutes with the barbells before his pre-lunch run. His sweatsuit was crisp and dry, but he didn't need it; he pulled on shorts and a tee-shirt marked *To Love Me Is to Love God* and started off down the beach.

And on the way back, there was Alys's van again, picking its way around the construction toward his house. "Hell," said Hake. He didn't think she had seen him, so he changed course and jogged up a wide street toward the church. On weekdays the trustees had established a nursery school to maximize use of the church facilities, and the parking lot, which doubled as a playground, was full of three-foot-high human beings and taller, tenser teachers, doing the Alley Cat to music from a battery cassette-recorder. "Hello, hello," called Hake, dodging past them and into the building.

As he had expected, no one had set up the chairs for the evening's MUSL-WUSL meeting. Most days that would have been an annoyance, but today it was a good way to use up twenty minutes or so while Alys made up her mind he wasn't going to be at the rectory and went away.

He pushed the chairs into a circle meditatively. Counseling didn't go as well as it used to. Or went in a different way. When he had been in the wheelchair the women who came to him told him all sorts of things, in intimate and exhaustive detail. They still did. But they sat straighter and smiled more often when they did. There was a kind of receptivity in the air that had not been there before with the women. And sometimes now the men seemed, well, fidgety. Like Ted Brant. Perhaps the ministry was a mistake. Perhaps the operation that had taken him out of the wheelchair had been a mistake, for that matter. It didn't seem to interfere with counseling. But he couldn't undo the operation, and how could he undo the ministry? At thirty-nine you didn't make a career change lightly—

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Except that maybe he *was* making one. Clergyman to spy. It was not what he had ever intended. He had certainly not sought it. But he couldn't deny that there was something about playing cloak-and-dagger games that seemed like fun. . . .

The kids were coming back from their lunch recess, which meant the church would no longer be habitable for the next couple of hours. Hake straightened the last of the chairs and started out. On the way he paused at the suggestion box, trying to remember. Had he opened it after the service yesterday? Not that there was ever much in it. He took out his key and unlocked it; yes, there was something. A paper clip. A pledge envelope—*why* couldn't people remember they were supposed to hand them in to the ushers? A note scribbled on the corner of the service program: "Can't we have some guitar music any more?" And an envelope marked:

> Rev. H. Hornswell Hake
> From his friends at the Maryland Phone company.
> *Personal.*

The door to the main meeting room opened, and Hake turned, the envelope in his hands, ready to repel an unauthorized invasion of four-year-olds. But it wasn't the kids from the nursery school, it was Alys Brant. She strode toward him with a flounce of green skirts and said, "Thought I'd find you here, Horny. Here you are. Is this what you wanted?"

Hake jammed the envelope in his pocket and took from her a sheaf of photocopies of CRT prints. It took him a moment to redirect his thoughts from his friends at the Maryland phone company to the curiosity that he had hoped Alys might satisfy. The stories seemed to be about oil tankers running aground and grain silos blowing up. They were not at all what he had wanted, but his ministerial training led him to express that thought by saying, "They're just fine, Alys."

"You don't look pleased."

"Oh, no! I'm very pleased. But actually—well, I can't make much sense of these things. I was hoping for, more like books."

"Books!"

He nodded, then hesitated. "I don't know if I explained what I wanted to you very well. Doesn't it seem to you that the quality of life has got worse in the last few years? Of course, I'm older than you are—"

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Silvery laugh. "You're not old, Horny, not with that bod!"

"Well, I am, Alys, but you must have noticed it too. So many things go wrong—not just tankers fouling beaches. Everything. And I thought somebody else must have noticed that and written a book about it."

"A book!"

"Or maybe a TV special?" He paused, feeling his way. It did not seem wise to say anything that Curmudgeon might construe as breaching security, so he couldn't come up and tell her that he wanted to know how long nations had been playing trip-games with each other. "The way nothing seems to work," he said at last. "Drug abuse and juvenile delinquency. Never having enough energy, and never doing anything about it. More mosquitos than there ever used to be. All that."

She said thoughtfully, "Well, yes, I suppose there's something. But books! You know, Horny, you're almost obsolete! Still—what you want is to browse, right? And for that we'll have to take you to a decent library." She pulled a date book out of her shoulder bag and thumbed through it. "Wednesday," she decided. "I've been thinking about going to New York then anyway—maybe see a matinee, have a nice lunch somewhere—"

"Really, Alys, I don't want to put you to all that trouble."

"Nonsense! I'll take the car. Pick you up at the rectory around—what? Eight? It'll be fun! We'll have the whole morning to do your library thing—and then, who knows?" She pressed his hand warmly and left him standing there.

Warning bells were going off in Hake's brain. She was a very attractive woman, but under the rules a protected species. Not to mention Ted.

Belatedly he remembered the letter from his Maryland telephone friends. It said:

> Dear Rev. Hake:
>
> There are two questions I would like to put to you.
>
> Why didn't you report what we did?
>
> Why did you agree to hurt people you don't even know?
>
> Please see if you can figure out the answers. Some day I will ask you for them.

There was no signature. He folded the letter up and then, reconsidering, tore it into tiny pieces, went into the men's room and

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flushed it down the toilet, ignoring the stares of two small boys. They were good questions. He didn't need to be told to think them over. They were what he had been asking himself for some time.

In the next thirty-six hours, the power-piggery summons was withdrawn because of a technical defect, traffic was rerouted along the oceanfront while the road before the rectory was repaired (after six years of potholes and detours!) and Hake got a call to appear at his first special meeting as a director of International Pets and Flowers. He could no longer believe in coincidence. Whoever was looking out for him was doing a good job. And in more ways than they could know, he thought, because that gave him an out. "Jessie!" he called. "Phone Alys Brant for me. Tell her I won't be able to make that library trip with her because I've got to go to an IPF meeting."

She appeared in the doorway. "She'd like it better if you called her yourself," she observed.

"I suppose she would, but please, Jessie."

"Huh." A moment later she was back in the doorway. "It's postponed till next Wednesday, same time," she said.

Well. "All right," he said. Next Wednesday would have to take care of itself. Meanwhile, he was feeling good, too good to sit still. "I think I'll work out a little with the barbells," he said.

Jessie watched him stretch and bend for a minute. "You know, Horny," she said at last, "you're a pretty lucky man."

"I know," he panted, but she was already on her way out again. It was true enough. For somebody who was at death's door two years earlier, whose best hope had seemed to be a an uneventful and probably rather short life in a wheelchair, he had a lot of interesting things opening up.

Not that he hadn't been lucky enough before. He had survived the wars of his infancy, after all, and even in a wheelchair good things happened. There were plenty of helping hands stretched out to a kid who was an orphan *and* a displaced person *and* handicapped: Scholarships. Grants. Medical services. Counseling. There were plenty of girls, too, who were willing to stretch out to him. The skinny, tall youth in the wheelchair was appealing. More than that. Non-threatening. "I'll ride with you in the elevator, Horny, here, let me take your books." "Horny, let me help you into the car." "Why don't you come over tonight, Horny, and we'll quiz each other for the Psych test?" Hake remained a virgin until he was twenty, at least technically he did, but not because of any lack of attractive and friendly persons willing to

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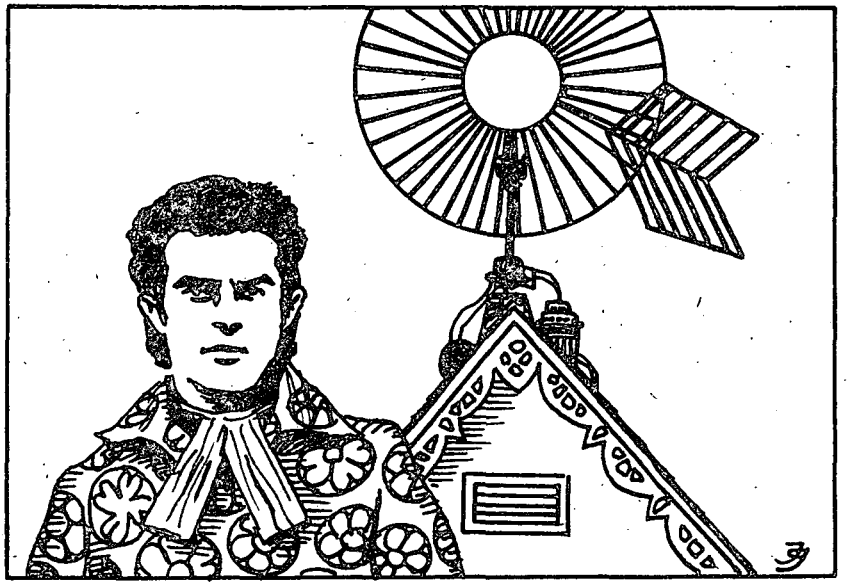

meet him well over halfway. What kept him a virgin, or, well, pretty much so, was something within himself. He did not want pity. And he detected it in every overture offered.

He could not remember a time when he was not sick. When he began turning blue every time he got tired he was only four. The first open-heart operation was when he was seven, and it was a disaster; it led almost immediately to the second one, which saved his life but did not strengthen it. By the time he was in his teens the prognosis for another operation was no longer as risky, but young Hake simply did not want to go through that again. In his wheelchair he rolled up to receive his B.A. in psychology, and his master's in social science. At the seminary he got his doctorate after two years of being carried to some of the classes—it was an old seminary, and a poor one, and they had not been able to afford compliance with the regulations for the handicapped. But he got it. And got a ministry after it, and held it to everybody's satisfaction until, in his mid-thirties, he began turning blue again—and the third operation not only worked, it took him out of the wheelchair for good. Oh, he was lucky, all right! A whole new life when he had least expected it.

But, all the same, it was confusing.

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Allen T. Haversford met him in person at the gate to old Fort Monmouth, all smiles and welcome. Haversford had a face like a toy bulldog's. It seemed small for the size of his head, and the reedy Franklin D. Roosevelt tenor voice that came out through the wattles of flesh around the mouth made him seem like a bulldog breathing helium. "So nice of you to come, Reverend Hake," he shrilled. "We've arranged a little luncheon for our trustees, but that's not for half an hour. Let me show you around."

The Fort had been mothballed decades earlier, but it was springing to life. Hake had heard rumors of building, but this was his first chance to see what was going on. Plenty was. Backhoes and bulldozers were scouring out a complicated pattern of trenches, and a pre-mix truck was lining them with concrete as fast as they were dug. "You're really making progress," he said.

"Indeed, indeed! These are going to be our fish tanks," sang Haverford jovially. "Salt-water, fresh-water. Big and small. We'll have the largest fish-fancier operation on the East Coast here. Ornamentals, tropicals, even food-fish for those who want to put in their own pools. And those will be the kennels, and over there the breeding pens. This is almost a closed-ecology system, Reverend Hake. We'll bring in livestock on the hoof; then we'll have our own abattoir, you can't see it because we haven't started construction yet, and we'll dress food for almost all the pets. Nothing will go to waste, I assure you. Meat and cereal mix for the dogs. Tilapia for the cats—we'll raise most of them ourselves. Entrails dried and pulverized for the fish." He winked. "We'll even use the, ah, sewage, Reverend. Yes, dung has plenty of nutritive value! Some gets dried and processed and fed to the stock. Some—and that includes sewage from visitors and the staff—gets settled and filtered and we grow algae on it; algae feed shrimp, shrimp feed fish. And the effluent goes into our hydroponics system."

"It really sounds efficient, Mr. Haversford."

"Indeed, indeed! And so it is. Over here," he led Hake to a sturdy plastic bubble, "our first greenhouse. Step inside this chamber, yes, thank you, and let me close the outer door, here we are. We don't want to waste heat, after all."

It was uncomfortably warm in the bubble. Hake loosened his collar as he looked around. Rows of elevated trays of seedlings, some of them already a foot tall and in leaf, some even in blossom. He did not recognize any of the flowers; surely those could not be morning-glories, nor those sunflowers. Haversford was

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proudly nipping the end off a cigar as he watched Hake looking around. "No power-piggery here," he boasted. "All this is solar energy! Not a calorie of fossil fuel burned, except a little bit for the lighting. And even that we hope to generate ourselves in time, if we can get priorities for a photovoltaic installation on the road surfaces."

"You're doing a fine job," said Hake, watching the man light up. Curiously, some of the nearer flowers seemed to turn toward his lighter.

"No, no, no! Not 'you', Reverend Hake, please! 'We'! You are very much a part of this, you know. Now, this section will be orchids, plus a few tropical ornamentals that like the damp and heat. And some experimental varieties—we will do quite a lot of hybridizing and development here."

"I suppose you'll feed the ones that don't work out to rabbits or something, and then feed those to the animals?"

"What? Rabbits? Why, what an excellent idea, Reverend Hake! I'll get our technical people to look into that right away. You see, I knew you'd be a great asset! And now, I think, it's about time for us to join the others for our luncheon meeting. . . . "

The "others" were seven persons, two department heads from IPF and the other five directors like Hake himself. He did not catch most of the names, and he had not seen most of the others before. One he recognized. The black man with the nearly bald head was a member of the Board of Chosen Freeholders. But who was the other, younger black with the cutoffs and worry beads? Or the very young girl with long blonde hair? And how many of them were on the board because the Agency was paying them off?

Haversford took his place at the head of the long table—linen cloth, linen napkins, crystal and silver at the place settings. On each plate there was a cup of fresh fruit—"From our own South Carolina orchards," Haversford pointed out—but what was under the cup was what interested Hake. It was an envelope with his name on it, and it contained a check. When he peeked inside the amount sent an electric shock through him. They hadn't been kidding.

The lunch was cold meats and salads, and when it was over and the coffee was served Haversford rapped his water tumbler with his spoon. "I want to thank you all for coming today on short notice," he said. "There are only two items before this special meeting. The first is to welcome our new trustee, Reverend Hake, which I perceive you have all been doing already. The second is to

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take on the proposal of our Public Relations Committee in regard to the marmosets. Ms. de lo Padua?"

The dark, athletic-looking woman at his left rose and went to a sideboard. She pulled the cloth away from a tall cage, reached in and lifted out a tiny woolly monkey. "As most of you remember," said Haversford, "at our last meeting we talked of plans to increase our exports of some of our pet lines, including the marmosets, by selecting a group of young people to go abroad and present specimens to their opposite numbers in several countries. Subject to your concurrence—" Mysteriously, he twinkled toward Hake. "—subject to *all* of your concurrence, a program has been prepared. The group of children will be students from local junior high and high schools, chosen on recommendation of their teachers. They will spend three weeks abroad, traveling in France, Germany, and Denmark, during which time they will give away twenty-two pairs of marmosets to schools and youth groups in nine cities. Ms. de lo Padua has a detailed itinerary plus the budget for the trip and will be glad to answer any questions. And in charge of the group—and I do hope you will accept?—will be our own Reverend Hake."

"*What*?"

Haversford nodded, beaming. "Yes, indeed, indeed, Reverend," he shrilled. "Of course, there is a suitable stipend included in the budget. I know it's quite an imposition—"

"But—but I can't, Mr. Haversford. I mean, I have obligations to my church—"

"Certainly you do. We all appreciate that. But if you'll take the word of an old curmudgeon, I think you'll find that the church can spare you for just this short time. May we vote, please?"

The 'ayes' had it, unanimously, all but Hake, who did not collect himself in time to vote. "An old curmudgeon," indeed! Did he have a choice? If it was the Lo-Wate Bottling Company's old Curmudgeon, probably not.

"I wasn't supposed to go to Germany," he said. But nobody was listening.

IV.

There were thirty-one of the kids, and they filled the whole Yellow-Left section of the aircraft, two and four abreast. The Lufthansa stewardesses moved up and down the aisles, checking

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seat-belts and making sure that air-sick bags were in every pouch, and Horny Hake and Alys Brant, his co-leader, followed. "You're really good with children," Alys said admiringly, as he patted two or three of the unfamiliar heads at random. "I wish I could relate to them the way you do." Then she retreated to her seat at the front of the compartment, leaving Hake to wonder why a woman who didn't think she could relate to children had maneuvered herself into being his co-leader. Unfortunately, he thought he knew the answer. By the time he was in his own seat and the jet was airborne he had confronted the fact that this was going to be one sticky trip.

He fell back on a resource of his childhood: counting off the hours till it was over. Nineteen days. That was 456 hours. Including ground travel time from and to Long Branch, call it 470. He had left the rectory—he checked his watch—nearly five hours before, so now he was a little better than one one-hundredth of the way through the ordeal. In about half an hour it would be one ninetieth. By the time they reached their hotel in Frankfort as much as a fortieth, maybe more, and by bedtime—

"Father Hake?"

He blinked and turned away from the window. "Mrs. Brant is waving to you, Father," whispered the stew, her flaxen hair brushing his cheek. "It's all right, you can get out of your seat for this."

At the head of the aisle Alys was already standing with one hand on the shoulder of a twelve-year-old, smiling sympathetically toward him.

"It's Jimmy Kenkel," she said confidentially. "He reached back and punched Martin here in the nose. Probably if you ask the stew she'll get some ice."

Martin's nose was streaming blood. The regular passengers who had been unlucky enough to be seated in Yellow-Left, dapper tall German businessmen and alert Japanese tourists, were whispering among themselves. Hake whipped out his handkerchief and held it to the boy's face, bracing himself against the thirty-degree climb of the plane and trying to get the stew's eye. By the time he looked around Alys was gone. By the time the stewardess brought ice the bleeding had stopped, and by the time the seat-belt sign was off Martin had already revenged himself by pouring the cup of melting ice over Jimmy's head.

Enough was enough. Hake turned his back on his charges and marched to the midships bar for a drink.

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"Two minds with but a single thought, Horny?" asked Alys cheerfully, turning from a conversation with a slim, uniformed man wearing waxed blonde mustaches.

Hake looked at her with displeasure. "The boy is all right, if you care. God knows what they'll be doing now they can get up and move around, though."

"You see, our minds do work alike. I was just asking Heinrich here if they could keep the seat-belt sign turned on in just our compartment."

"*Ja*, that would be good. But not possible." The man stuck out his hand. "Heinrich Scholl, Father," he said. "I am your purser."

"I'm not a priest, just a Unitarian minister," Hake said testily, but he accepted a whiskey and water, compliments of the purser. The children had not yet realized they were free, and the stews were moving among them, passing out Cokes and orange juice and packets of in-flight games and puzzles. Hake began to relax. He had flown tens of thousands of miles before he was ten years old, and hardly at all since. It was all new to him, from the back-tapered wing outside the window with its peculiarly feathered tip to the topless bar-stew serving their drinks. The immensity of the aircraft astonished him. He had never fully comprehended the size of the big intercontinental jets, more than a thousand people inside one great steel sausage zapping across the sea. "But I don't see why we have to have them," he said. "These jets, I mean. What a waste of energy!"

"Waste?" repeated the purser politely. "But that is not so, Mr. Hake. For the mails alone we must have them, so why not fill them up with passengers?"

"But with energy so short—" he began, thinking of heatless days in Long Branch and the tons of fossil fuel each of those huge engines on the wing was pouring out.

The purser said kindly, "It is all carefully planned, I assure you, Mr. Hake. Air transport is a vital service. We carry valuable medical supplies, diplomatic pouches, all kinds of strategically vital materials. Why, this very aircraft carried measles vaccine from Köln to New Guinea just, let me see, just last year. Or possibly the year before."

And since then? Hake asked himself. But all he said was, "Granting that, but why so many of them? I mean, does every pipsqueak little country in the world have to have its own flag line?"

"Pip? Squeak?" repeated the purser, mustache quivering.

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"Oh, I don't mean Lufthansa, of course. All of them. Little countries you never even heard of. I see them coming in to the traffic patterns off Long Branch. African airlines and Latin American airlines and God knows what airlines. Couldn't America, for instance, use Air France or Aeroflot or whatever, instead of flying its own planes all the time?"

Alys laughed and pushed her glass forward for a refill. "Oh, Horny! And let them do God knows what with our mail all the way across the Atlantic? You are so naïve!"

The purser nodded stiffly and said, "It has been most interesting speaking with you, Mr. Hake, but now I must attend to my duties. The flight attendants must now start serving dinner."

"And maybe you should too," said Alys, looking past his shoulder. Ten of the kids were lined up for the toilets, and some of the boys were fighting again. "It's hard on you," she commiserated, "but boy-boy fights are a man's job, aren't they?"

Boy-girl fights also turned out to be a man's job, and so, Hake found out, were some of the seamier kinds of what he had always considered pure girl questions. Tiny Brenda came to him and whispered, "Reverend Hake, I'm having my personal hygiene."

He leaned closer to her, juggling the half-eaten dinner tray.

"What?"

"My friend is here," she said, blushing.

"What friend are you talking about?" he demanded, and then Alys drifted by to whisper in his ear.

"The poor little thing wants a sanitary napkin," she said. "Tell her they're in the washrooms."

"They're in the washrooms, Brenda," he said.

The girl nodded. "Some of the girls call it 'my friend'. I call it 'my personal hygiene' because that's what it says on the bag in the bathroom in school."

"So go to the washroom," said Hake, patting her cautiously on the shoulder; and then to Alys, "Why me?"

"Because you're the father-surrogate, of course. I'm only a kind of elderly girl," she said sympathetically. "Well. It's going to be a long flight. I think I'll see if I can catch some sleep."

"Me too," said Hake hopefully, surrendering his tray to a no longer smiling stew.

The hope never materialized. All through the five-hour flight Hake and the stews quelled insurrection. At least, Hake thought, toward the end of it, he was beginning to know some of them as

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individuals: Jimmy and Martin and Brenda; black Heidi and little blonde Tiffany; Michael, Mickey, and Mike; the big, gentle, Buddha-like twelve-year-old, Sam Wang; the three oldest girls, all from the little religious backwater of Ocean Grove. They all looked astonishingly alike, wedge-cut hairdos and disapproved lipstick and eye-shadow, but they were not related. One was named Grace, and one was named Pru, and the shortest and strongest and meanest of the three was named Demeter. Demeter was the one who swatted the youngest boys on the rear as they stretched across adult passengers to get at each other. Demeter and Grace finked to the Lufthansa stews when three of the junior-highs were smoking in the toilet. Demeter and Pru bribed the smaller ones to be quiet with the inflight game kits. How splendid it all would have been, if only the Ocean Grovers had been doing it all to help Hake, instead of to soften him up for their own misdeeds: sharing drinks with the salesmen in the first-class lounge, making illicit dates with the male flight attendants. Through it all Alys slept like a baby, head on the shoulder of the Turkish Army officer in the seat next to her. But Hake didn't and neither did the stews.

Eleven hours down, four hundred and fifty-nine to go. It was going to be a long trip.

They arrived at the immense, echoing Frankfort airport at two A.M., local time. Worst of all possible times: because of the time difference, the kids were not really quite ready for sleep; but they would have to be up and presenting marmosets to a *Kinderhalle* at nine the next morning. Hake kept the children whipped into line in the transit lounge while Alys, yawning prettily, sorted through the room assignments.

Somehow Hake got them all through Customs and into the main departure hall. There were no chairs, of course; but somehow he kept them from killing each other through the hour-long wait for their chartered bus until the driver arrived, furiously complaining in German, finally managing to explain that he had been waiting outside in the parking lot for the past two hours. Somehow he got them into their rooms at the shiny big hotel, with the baggage approximately in the right rooms, or close enough. "I've put you in with Mickey and Sam Wang," Alys said, handing him keys. "Sam snores. And Mickey's mother says he wets the bed if he isn't got up at least twice during the night, so—anyway, I've finished your room assignments for you, Horny," she said virtuously. "Now I think I'd better tuck in myself. It's been a long day.

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Oh, I've had to take an extra room. It wouldn't be fair to the children to put any of them in with me, I'm so restless. I'd keep them up all night."

He watched her sway gracefully into one of the exposed teardrop elevators, then sighed, finished signing the registration cards and counting the passports and followed to his own room.

He found the bed so delightful that he allowed himself to lie with his arms crossed behind his head for a while, enjoying the prospect of sleep before letting himself experience it. Sam Wang's snoring blended with the mutter of the air-conditioner and the distant yammer of someone's TV set across the hall. At least his virtue was spared—no, not his virtue so much as his sense of professional morality; bird-dogging around European hotels with Alys would have seemed pretty attractive if he hadn't been her marriage counselor. But if she wasn't after his body, why was she here? For that matter, why was *he* here? He had no doubt in the world that Lo-Wate Bottling Company, or whatever the spook factory chose to call itself, was behind it all. No, that was clear enough. But what was it, exactly, that they were behind? If they were sending a new agent on a mission to Western Europe, shouldn't they tell him what the mission was? Were the marmosets secret intelligence couriers? Was Curmudgeon going to turn up in trenchcoat and fedora, out of some rain-shadowed doorway, to hand him The Papers? And if so, what would the papers say? It seemed a lousy way to run an intelligence agency.

No doubt it would all be revealed to him in time. He uncrossed his arms, rolled over, buried his head in the pillow, closed his eyes—

And opened them again.

He had forgotten to put Mickey on the pot.

It would have been easy enough to go on forgetting it, but a trust was a trust. Hake pushed himself out of bed, thrust his arms into his robe and coaxed the half-sleeping ten-year-old into the bathroom. With difficulty he steered him away from the bidet to the proper appliance, but then was rewarded for his efforts and got the still unawake boy back into bed . . . just as the phone rang stridently.

Hake swore and grabbed it. A voice screeched in his ear, "Where the hell are my marmosets?"

"Marmosets? Who is this?" Hake demanded in a hoarse whisper; Sam Wang's snoring had stopped and Mickey was rocking resentfully in his bed.

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"Jasper Medina. You better get down here, Hake, and start explaining where the monkeys are. I'll be at the elevators." And he hung up.

Resentfully Hake carried his discarded clothes into the bathroom and put them back on. As he combed his hair he glowered at his reflection: that healthy outdoors face now had circles under its eyes, and this trip was just beginning! He let himself out as quietly as he could and waited for the glass elevator bubble to come for him.

Waiting for him in the main lobby was a tall, lean man with bald head and white beard, chewing on a corncob pipe. "Hake? What's your excuse for this foul-up? What do you mean, you don't know what I'm talking about? There's twenty-two pair of Golden Lion marmoset fancies coming in with you, and where are they? My boys've been all over Frankfort tonight, trying to locate them!"

"Who are you?"

"Don't you listen, sonny? I'm Medina, from the Paris office. IPF. These are my assistants—" he pointed to four men clustered around the wall telephones, two of them talking into instruments, the other two standing by. "Sven. Dieter. Carlos. Mario. We're supposed to help out with your project."

"I sure can use a little of that," said Hake feelingly, beginning to feel more friendly. "Those kids—"

"Kids? Oh, no, Hake, we've got nothing to do with the *kids*. We'll take care of the *marmosets* for you, if you'll just tell us where they are. But not the kids. Now if you'll just—wait a minute. What is it, Dieter?"

One of the men was coming toward them, beaming. "Jasper," he said (he pronounced it "Yosper"), "these monkeys, we have found them. At the *Zookontrolle*, and all quite well."

"Ah." Medina puffed on his pipe, and then smiled broadly. "Well, in that case, Hake," he said, offering his hand, "there's no need for us to waste time here, is there? Get a good night's sleep. I'll meet you for breakfast."

Get a good night's sleep. . . . By the time the glass elevator had him back at his floor he was almost asleep already, but he forced himself to put Mickey on the toilet one more time. Then he dropped his clothes on the floor and crawled into bed, clicking off the lamp beside his pillow.

But even through closed eyes he perceived that the light hadn't gone out. When he opened them he saw why. Outside the window

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it was broad daylight.

Nineteen days in glamorous Europe! It was a good thing he hadn't believed in that in the first place, Hake thought; at least he was spared disappointment. Cathedrals, museums, lovely river views, castles—they saw the Cologne cathedral out of the window of a bus; the Rhine was a streak of greenish-gray through tattered clouds. In Copenhagen a whole afternoon's schedule had to be called off, because Tivoli was closed for repairs, having been bombed silly by some unreconciled Frisian nationalists—good deal, or might have been, because they needed the rest; but in practice what it meant was an extra six hours of riding herd on the kids. In Oslo a teachers' strike closed the schools and left Hake's charges to present their marmosets to a red-eyed principal taking five minutes from the all-night contract negotiations.

After that first morning in Frankfort, when he had gone to Alys's room to knock her awake—and found in front of her door the neat brown boots of a Turkish major—Hake stopped expecting Alys to attempt to assault his virtue. She didn't need to. There were plenty of other targets. If she hungered and thirsted for his flesh, she concealed it well. She spent more time with old, bald, half-blind Jasper Medina than with Hake. Although, to be fair, she spent more time with Hake than she did with anybody else. Especially the kids.

Jasper was a puzzle. Since he was from IPF's European customer-relations department, it followed as the night the day that he had to be a spook. But he offered no secret plans, conveyed no instructions; when Hake mentioned the name "Curmudgeon" in his presence the old man gave a cracked laugh and said, "Curmudgeon? Is that what you think I am? Let me tell you, sonny, I'm exactly what you'll be in another forty years—only better," he added virtuously, "because I accept the Lord as my Savior, and you don't!"

But he was always there, he and his four silent helpers. The marmosets got their grapes and meal worms every four hours; where there was sun to make it possible, got an occasional afternoon in the open air; were brushed and groomed and picked over for fleas. The marmosets had plenty of supervision.

What the kids had was Horny Hake.

By the time they reached Copenhagen, Hake believed he had encountered every ailment young human flesh was heir to—or heiress to; *especially* heiress to: cuts and scrapes, sulks and

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sneezes, faints and fevers. (126 hours down, 344 to go—better than a quarter of the way.) By Oslo it was mostly fevers and sneezes. They weren't serious, but they kept Hake up most nights to make sure they weren't. Alys slept securely through to breakfast, explaining that Hake's long experience with counseling had made him so much better at handling night alarms that there was no point, really, in her waking—"just to be in your way, Horny." And, of course, the Marmoset Duennas did not let themselves get involved. Their lives had become pretty easy, with the number of woolly monkeys dwindling at every stop. But adamantly they continued to refuse to have anything to do with the children; one species of sub-human primate was all they had contracted for.

Sven and Dieter, Mario and Carlos—why did Hake always have difficulty telling them apart? They were very different in height, weight, and coloring. It had to do with the way they wore their hair, all in a sort of Henry the Fifth soupbowl, and the clothes: always the same, pale blue jackets and dark blue slacks. But there was more than that. They seemed to think and talk the same way. Hake often had the impression there was only one person speaking, sometimes with a German accent, sometimes Spanish, but with only one mind behind them. "Yosper says we must go to bed early, six A.M. flight in the morning." "Yosper advises do not drink this water, last month PLO terrorists filled reservoir with acid." As it seemed to Hake, the mind behind them was Yosper's.

And all of that made sense, perfect sense, if they were in fact disciplined spooks on the payroll of International Pets and Flowers, alias Lo-Wate, alias the shock troops of the cool war. But were they? Hake saw no sure signs. No unexplained absences from duty. No secret meetings. Not even meaningful glances among them, or sentences begun and left incomplete. If they were spooks, when were they going to start spooking?

More than once Hake had made up his mind to confront Yosper and demand truth. Whatever the truth might be. But he had not gone through with it, only with hints. And Yosper never responded to them. It was not that Yosper was not a talkative man. He loved it. He never tried of telling Hake and Alys all the ways in which cities they raced through were inferior to their American equivalents—not counting, now and then, the occasional place where you could get a decent *smorgasbord* or a worthwhile *Jägertopf*. And he never tired of explaining to them why Unitarians

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shouldn't call themselves religious; Yosper was Church of God, twice born, fully saved, and sublimely sure that the time would come when he would be sitting next to the Throne, while Hake and Alys and several billion others would be deeply regretting their failures in a much worse place. But he wouldn't talk about anything related to espionage.

And he wouldn't help with the kids; and of the two failures, Hake found the second hardest to live with.

By the three-quarters mark they were in Munich. The children's sneezes were reaching a crescendo, and Hake himself was feeling the strain. He was more exhausted than he had ever been since the days in the wheelchair, and unhappy with the way his insides were conducting themselves. But there was an unexpected delight. Yosper had arranged for an American school in Munich to take the children off their hands for the whole weekend, and so the grownups had the pension to themselves.

The enjoyment would have been more pronounced, Hake thought, if his gut had not felt as though someone had stuffed it past its load limit with chili peppers and moldy pickles. He did not quite feel like seeing the town. Still . . . three hundred and sixty hours down, and only a hundred and ten to go! And no kids till Monday morning.

The pension turned out to be the top floor of a grimy little office building, on a side street near the intersection of two big boulevards. From the outside it didn't look like much. But it was clean and to Hake, who for fifteen days had been resentfully calculating the energy costs of jet fuel, high-speed elevators and hotel saunas, it was a welcome relief from power-pigging. He did not mind the fact that the rooms clustered around an airshaft, or that there were no porters for the luggage. He didn't even mind the fact that he had to carry Alys's as well as his own—"I'm really sorry, Horny, but I just don't feel up to lugging it." He didn't mention that neither did he.

Dinner was pot-luck, cooked by the proprietor and served by his wife. To Hake's surprise, Alys showed up for it. Evidently she had run out of Turkish majors, SAS co-pilots, and Norwegian desk clerks. She spent the afternoon in her room but appeared, wan but gracious, at the head of the dinner table. As she picked up her spoon she was brought up by Yosper rapping a fork against his glass.

"Yosper always says grace," said Sven—or Dieter—with a scowl.

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"Of course," said Yosper, also scowling, and then, bowing his head, "Our Lord, we humble servants thank You for Your bounty and for these foods we are about to eat. Bless them to Your own good ends, and make us truly grateful for what we receive. Amen."

As the five scowls disappeared, Mario—or Carlos—said, "It is a good custom to have, is it not so? It is like Pascal's wager. If God is listening, He is pleased. If not, no harm is done."

"Don't be irreverent," said Yosper, but mildly. "Pascal was a con-man. You shouldn't obey God's commandments to save your skin. You should obey because you know God exists, and the daily miracle of life proves it to you." Alys coughed and changed the subject.

"Horny, I haven't been idle all day," she said sweetly, handing him a couple of newspapers and a magazine. "These were in my room. I've gone through them all and marked the parts that interest you."

Yosper peered at her over his uneaten soup. "How do you know what interests him?"

"Oh," she said brightly, "it's a sort of research project I've been doing for him. He has been very interested in what he calls the increasing degradation of life—you know, all the things that mess us up— Horny, is something wrong?"

"No," he said, and then, with more conviction, "Oh, no. Go ahead. I was just thinking about something." What he had been thinking about was that if Yosper reported to Curmudgeon, he would surely report that Hake was doing a little unauthorized digging. But the second thought was, why not? He hadn't been told not to be curious. And one of the things he was curious about was how Yosper would react.

Which turned out to be not at all. He took the napkin out of his lap, dropped it on the table and waved away the plate the proprietress was bringing over from the mahogany sideboard. "You know," he said, "I don't think this is exactly what I'm in the mood for. What do you think, Dieter? Want to try the Hofbrauhaus?"

"Good idea, Yosper," said Dieter enthusiastically—or Carlos; and all the others followed suit. Yosper paused.

"How about you two?" he said. "You've got the night off, after all."

"What is this beer-hall?" Alys asked.

He cocked his head at her—with his beard and bald head, he was beginning to look like a marmoset, Hake thought. "It's one of

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the great tourist spots of Munich. Sausage you wouldn't believe. Big mugs of beer. And *Schweinfleisch!* Pork, all pink and white, with that red cabbage and potato dumplings, and all that rich, fat gravy—"

Alys dropped her spoon. "Excuse me," she said, fleeing.

Yosper stared at Hake. "What's the matter with her?" he demanded.

"I, uh, don't think she feels well. Actually, I don't feel too fine myself. You go ahead, Yosper. I think I'll skip dinner and turn in early. . . . "

At least he wasn't sick to his stomach. Grateful for that, he chained the door to his room and opened the papers Alys had given him: A London *Times*, a two-day-old Rome *Daily American*, the international edition of *Newsweek*. Besides reading material, he had a secret treasure of his own: two shot-sized bottles of whiskey sours, acquired on one of the many flights when he didn't have time to drink them. Rock and rye was good for a cold, he reasoned. Who was to say whiskey sours weren't too?

They went down. And, surprisingly, they stayed down. They made him feel—well, not better. But at least different. The buzz from the whiskey flavored the misery from the cold, or whatever, enough at least to make a change.

He thumbed through the news, for conscience's sake more than interest's:

The tax on liquid hydrogen was going up 50 percent "to finance research on making America fuel-independent within the next thirty years." The mad killer who had fire-bombed twenty-two Chicago women wearing mood rings had been caught, and announced God had told him to do it. International Harvester had delivered its 10,000th Main Battle Tank, Mark XII, direct from the production line to the U.N. scrapping grounds in Detroit. The President declared that the bargaining-counter production rate was insufficient for the needs of upcoming disarmament talks, and proposed a special bond issue to finance 5,000 additional advanced warplanes to be built and scrapped within the next five years. (He also mentioned that the income tax would have to go up to pay for the bonds.) The microwave receivers in the Texas Panhandle had to be shut down because of excessive damage to the Van Allen belts; as a result coastal Louisiana was battling its heaviest spring blizzard and most of Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico were without power.

A normal enough week in America. Alys had also marked

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European news, but Hake didn't really care enough to read it. He had seen enough griminess and grittiness in the past fifteen days to decide that the Europeans were not really any better than the people in Long Branch, New Jersey, as far as the quality of life was concerned.

And besides, the quality of his own life was not seeming very good just then. The whiskey sours might have been a mistake.

Dizzily he got up and peered at himself in the mirror.

He really felt sick. Being sick alarmed Hake to a degree that a man who had been well all his life might hardly understand. He inspected his tongue (reasonably pink), his eyes (everything considered, not really very red) and wished he had something to take his temperature with.

Maybe all he needed was a little more sleep, and, to be sure, a hell of a lot more exercise. He hadn't been able to pack his barbells. He studied his belly, looking for a sign of a paunch; his dorsals, for a hint of flab. None there—yet. But he had missed two weeks' jogging and a dozen judo lessons on this trip, and how long could he continue to do that without penalty? He resolved to try to trap at least one of the Ocean Grovers into at least a ping-pong game the next morning.

But in the morning he was in no shape to do it, even if it hadn't been Sunday and the girls off at the American school, or disrupting some unfortunate church.

He bathed, shaved, dressed and unsteadily left the pension to seek a drugstore. Within three blocks he passed two of them. Both were closed, but at least they gave him the name of what he was looking for. He excused himself to an elderly gentleman sunning himself on a doorstep and said, "*Bitte, wo bist eine Apotheke*?" He had to repeat it twice before he got an answer, and then the words that came back at him were not helpful. But the pointed finger was.

The druggist was a young woman who wore her red hair in ringlets. She spoke no English, nor Hebrew, nor any of the varieties of Arabic Hake summoned up. If the *kibbutzim* had not been so strict in their customs he might at least have had a little Yiddish to try on her. But all he had going for him was ingenuity. After that had failed four or five times it occurred to him to cough dramatically against the back of his hand and pantomime drinking from a bottle. "*Ja, ja*!" cried the druggist, enlightened, and reached him something off a shelf.

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Blearily Hake peered at the label. Of course, it was in German. *Antihistamin-Effekt* seemed understandable enough. But what was a *Hustentherapeutikum*? The names of the ingredients were easier to read. Science is a universal language, and by adding a few letters and subtracting some he managed to figure out some of the things that were in the bottle. The difficulty with that was that Hake was no pharmacist, and exactly what maladies were *Natriumcitrat* and *Ammoniumchlorid* good for? When he came to the dosages he felt himself on more solid ground. *Erwachsene* had to mean "for adults" (if only because the column next to it was headed *Kinder).* And *1-2 Teelöffel alle 3-4 Stunden* seemed to reveal itself.

While he was hesitating, a tall woman in a floppy hat came into the store and began peering thoughtfully at a display of cosmetics. Hake rehearsed the entire rest of his German vocabulary three or four times, and then crossed over to her for help. "*Bitte, gnaedige Frau*," he began. "*Sprechen-sie* English?"

She turned to look at him.

The face under the floppy hat was one he had last seen in a Maryland kitchen. "Pay the lady, Hake," she said. "Then let's you and I go where we can talk."

If the drugstores seemed to want to close on Sundays, the bars did not. They found a sidewalk cafe, chillier than Hake would have preferred but at least remote from other people, and the woman ordered them both big brandy-inhaler glasses of raw Berlin beer with raspberry syrup at the bottom of each glass. Hake took what he estimated to be a *2-Teelöffel* swig of the *Hustentherapeutikum* and washed it down with beer. The cold was gratifying on his palate. The taste, less so. It wasn't what his body wanted, and the pressure in his gut increased. He felt as though he wanted to burp, but was afraid to risk it. He said, "You know, young lady, I could have you arrested."

"Not here, Hake."

"Kidnaping is certainly an extraditable offense."

"Offense? Oh, but Hake, you didn't file charges, did you?"

"There's no statute of limitations on kidnaping."

"Oh, shit, Hake, lay off the lawyer talk. It doesn't become you. Let's talk about realities, like why you didn't go to the fuzz. Have you thought about the reasons for that?"

"I know the reason for that! I, uh, I didn't know where to report you."

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"Meaning," she said bitterly, "that you had committed yourself to the spooks and knew you shouldn't involve the regular police. Right? And you were afraid to tell the spooks about it because you didn't know what would happen."

He kept his mouth shut. He didn't want to admit to her that he simply hadn't known how to contact the Agency until the time had passed when it seemed appropriate. He was also aware that he shouldn't be telling this woman anything at all. Or even be talking to her. Who knew if that waiter, idly kicking at a windblown scrap of newspaper, or that teenage girl in the hot-pants suit biking down the boulevard, was not reporting to someone somewhere about this meeting?

Under other circumstances he probably would have liked being with her a lot. Whether in pants-suit or flowered spring dress and floppy hat, she was a striking-looking woman. She was at least as tall as Hake, would be more if she wore heels, and slimmer than he would have thought of as beautiful—if, on any of their meetings, it had ever mattered whether or not she was beautiful. She was perplexing in more ways than one: for instance, how quaint to wear an old-fashioned gold wedding ring! He hadn't seen one of those in . . . . he couldn't remember when he had seen one last.

"I don't have much time, Hake," she said severely, "and I've got a lot to say. We checked you out, you know. You're a decent person. You're kind, idealistic, if you picked up a stray kitten you'd find it a home. You work ninety hours a week at a dog job for slave pay. So what did they do to you to turn you into a killer?"

"*Killer*!"

"Well, what would you call it? They're close enough, Hake, and you're just beginning with them. Who knows what they'll have you doing? When you took this job, you must have known what it meant."

It was impossible for him to admit to this young, handsome, angry woman that he not only didn't know what the job meant, he hadn't yet found out exactly what it was. He said thickly, "I have my own morality, lady."

"You exactly do, yes, and yet you're doing things that I know *you* know are violating it. Why?"

He perceived with relief that the question was rhetorical and she was about to answer it for him. Carrying on this conversation was getting pretty hard. He tried to concentrate on her words, in spite of the growing evidence in his stomach that he was sicker than he had thought.

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She said mournfully, "Why. God, the time we've spent trying to answer that one. What changes people like you? Money? But you can't want money, or you wouldn't be, for God's sake, a *minister*. Patriotism? You weren't even born in America! Some psychosis, maybe, because you were a cripple most of your life and the girls wouldn't go near you?"

"The girls," Hake said with dignity, "were very often willing to overlook my physical problems."

"Spare me the story of your adolescent fumblings, Hake. I know that isn't it, either. Or shouldn't be. We checked you out that way, too. So what does that leave? Why would you flipflop a hundred and eighty degrees, from being an all-giver, helping anyone who comes near you any way you can, to a trouble-making, misery-spreading cloak-and-dagger fink? There's one answer! Hake, what do you know about hypnotism?"

"*Hypnotism?*"

"You keep repeating what I say, but that's not responsive, you know. Yes, I said 'hypnotism'. In case you don't know it, you show all the diagnostic signs: trance logic, tolerance of incongruities, even analgesia. Or anyway analgesia of the soul; you'd hurt about who you're involved with if something didn't stop you. Even hypnotic paranoia. You pick up cues that a person not in the trance state would ignore. You picked up cues from us after we kidnaped you! That's why you didn't report us, you know."

"Oh, come off it. Nobody hypnotized me."

"As to that, how would you know? If you'd been given a post-hypnotic command to forget it?"

He shook his head obstinately. "Oh, sure," she sneered. "*You'd* know, because you're you, right? But if you weren't hypnotized, how do you explain signing up with the spooks?"

I can't, he thought. But what he said out loud was, "I don't have to explain anything to you. I don't even know who you are—expect your name's Lee and you're married."

She looked at him thoughtfully from under the brim of her hat. Hake couldn't see her eyes very well, and that disconcerted him. Well, everything about her disconcerted him. "I have to go to the bathroom," he said shortly. He was not feeling well at all, and sitting out at this trashy, chilly sidewalk cafe—Munich was having some sort of garbagemen's strike, and the sidewalks were loaded with old, stale trash—was not making him feel any better.

When he came back, the waiter had brought refills of the *Berlinerweissen*, and Lee had removed her hat. She looked a lot

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younger and prettier without it, and forlorn. She would have seemed quite appealing under the right circumstances. Which were not these. Hake realized apprehensively that he had finished the whole first beer. The syrup at the bottom had cloyed his palate enough so that he wanted the astringency of the new one, but his stomach was serving notice that it was prepared to take only so much more insult.

"As to who I am, Hake," she said moodily, "I've blown my cover to you already, haven't I? So my name is Leota Pauket. I was a graduate student at—never mind where. Anyway, I'm not even a graduate student any more. My dissertation subject was disapproved, and that's what started all this."

"I hope you're going to tell me what you're talking about."

"You bet I am, Hake. Maybe more than you want to know." She took a long sip at the new beer, staring out at the littered street. "I'm a Ute."

"You don't look Indian."

"Don't wise off, Hake. I'm a Utilitarianist. I used to belong to the Jeremy Bentham Club at school. You know: 'the greatest good for the greatest number,' and all that. It was a small club, only six of us. But we were closer than brothers. I've had to deal with some pretty crummy people since I got into this, Hake. There are bad ones on the other side too, as bad as your lot, and I can't always pick my allies. But back in school they were a good bunch, all grad students, all in economics or sociology. All first-class human beings. My dissertation advisor was our faculty rep, and she was something else. She's the one who suggested the topic to me: *Covariants and correlatives: An examination into the relationship between degradation of non-monetary standard of living factors and decreasing international tensions.* She helped—"

"Hey!" Hake sat up straighter. "Can I get a copy of that?"

"My dissertation? Don't be stupid, Hake. I told you I never finished it. Still," she added, looking pleased, "I do have the preliminary draft somewhere. I suppose I could find a copy if you really wanted to read it."

"I do. Truly I do. I've been trying to dig up that sort of information myself."

"Hum." She took another sip of the beer, looking at him over the wide rim of the glass. "Maybe there's hope for you after all, Hake. Anyway. She's the one who put us on the track of your spook friends. She said it was impossible all these things could have happened at random. Something had to be behind it. The

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more I dug, the more sure I was that she was right. Then she got fired. She was paid on a government teaching grant. And the grant was canceled. And then the man who replaced her rejected my whole dissertation proposal. And the new faculty advisor to the JBC recommended we dissolve it. So we did—publicly. And we went underground. That," she said, counting on her fingers, "was one, two—three years ago." Hake nodded, watching her fingers. "It wasn't hard to make sure of our facts: the United States was deliberately sabotaging other nations. It wasn't even hard to find out which agency was doing it—we had help. Then the question was, what do we do about it? We thought of going public, TV, press, the whole works. But we decided against. What would we get? A ten-day sensation in the headlines, and then everybody would forget. Just printing what these people do legitimizes it; you've been in Washington, you've seen the statues to the Watergate Martyrs. So we decided to fight fire with fire—Hake? What's the matter with you?"

He was pointing at her ring. "Now I know where I saw you first! You were the old lady on the bus!"

"Well, of course I was. I told you we had to check up on you."

"But how did you know where I was going to be?"

She seemed uncomfortable. "I told you we had help."

"What kind of help?" He was finding it harder and harder to follow the conversation, or even to sit upright in his chair.

"None of your business. Shut up about that, Hake. I'm trying to tell you—Hake! What are you doing?"

He realized he was on the ground looking up at her. "I think I'm fainting," he explained; and then he was.

What happened next was very unclear to Hake. He kept waking briefly, and passing out again. Once he was in a room he didn't recognize, with Leota and a man he didn't know, somehow Oriental, bearded, bending over him. They were talking about him:

"You're not a doctor, Subarama! He's too sick for your foolishness!"

"Ssh, ssh, Leota, it is only something to relieve the pain, a little acupuncture, it will bring down the fever—"

"I don't believe in acupuncture," Hake said, but then he realized that it was a long time later and he was in a different place, what seemed to be a military ambulance plane, with a black woman in a nurse's uniform who looked at him queerly.

"This isn't acupuncture, honey," she soothed, "just a little shot to make you feel better—"

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And when he woke up again he was in a real hospital. And it had to be back home in New Jersey, because the doctor taking his pulse was Sam Cousins, whose daughter had been married in Hake's own church. His throat was painfully dehydrated. He croaked, "What—what happened, Sam?"

The doctor put his wrist down and looked pleased. "There you are, Horny. Nice to have you back. Orderly, give me a glass of water."

As Hake was greedily taking the permitted three sips, the doctor said, "You've been pretty sick, you know. Here, that's enough water just now. You can have some more in a minute."

Hake followed the glass wistfully with his eyes. "With what?"

"Well, that's the problem, Horny. Some new kind of virus. All the kids got it too, and so did Alys. But it doesn't bother young children much. Or older people. The ones it really knocks out are the healthy prime-of-lifers, like you." He got up. "I'll be back in a while, Horny, and we'll have you out of here in a day or two. But right now," he said, nodding to the orderly, "no visitors."

"Yes, doctor," said the orderly, closing the door behind him and turning toward Hake, and then Hake saw who was wearing those whites. It was almost not a surprise.

"Hello, Curmudgeon," he said.

"Not so loud," said the spook. "There's no bugs in the room, but who knows who's walking down the corridor outside?"

He pulled some newspapers out of the bedside table. "I just wanted to give you these, and let you know we're thinking of you. We've got a new assignment for you as soon as you're well enough."

"New assignment? Cripes, Curmudgeon, I haven't even done the first one yet. Why would you give me another assignment when I screwed up this one by getting sick?"

The spook smiled and unfolded the papers. Several stories were circled in red:

NEW VIRUS CUTS PRODUCTION
40% IN SWEDISH FACTORIES

said the New York *Times*, and

DANES GRIPE,
GERMANS COUGH

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said the *Daily News*, over a picture of long lines of men waiting to get into a public lavatory in Frankfort.

"What makes you think you screwed it up?" asked Curmudgeon.

SWIFT COMPLETION

The post officers trembled with fear
When a temponaut chanced to appear.
"I've come from the past
To see if, at last,
My mail is finally here!"

—Brad Calhoon

NOTE TO TEACHERS

Can we help you? We would like to participate in your classroom activities, especially if you are teaching SF as a subject or using SF in writing or literature courses. To do this, we need to know what you need. Do you use a teaching guide? If so, how is it arranged? Do you think the stories in *IASFM* are suitable for use in your class? What do you currently use in class? If you decide to use *IASFM* as your source of SF material, what kind of instructor's material would you need to do this? In short, we'd like some input from you. Please write us at PO Box 13116, Philadelphia PA 19101, and tell us how we can help.

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Dear Everybody,

Congratulations on a job well done. Finally, a science fiction magazine that's bloody well FUN to read. At long last, a science fiction magazine that doesn't PREACH.

The plain fact is that I started out wanting, more than anything else, to be a science fiction writer. Seventeen-year-old earthlings are prone to such strange desires. And I certainly did try! I wrote. I re-wrote. I re-re-wrote, ad infinitum. Naturally, I never got published. Having recently re-read these early writings of mine, it is no longer a mystery as to WHY I didn't get published, but that is neither here nor there. The fact is, that along about 1963-4, there occurred a terrible thing in science fiction. The editors started to preach. They preached to the readers, they preached to the writers (and the would-be writers, like me), and to the movie producers and directors, and to anyone else they felt had not reached their "higher plane" of science fiction. They took themselves so seriously that it became serious. Too serious. Boring, eventually.

So I stopped reading science fiction. Then, sadly, I stopped writing science fiction. Then, even more sadly, I stopped writing.

Then, wonder of wonders, I stumbled across your magazine. Refusing to believe that THE GREAT DOCTOR would lend his name to anything less than something terrific, I bought it. I hurried home. I read it. I regretted that it was issue number 8! I had missed seven entire issues of this charming, humorous, real, honest-to-Krell FUN science fiction magazine. So now I've bought your anthology, and it's terrific, too! So now I've dragged out the old Smith-Corona, cleaned it, bought a new ribbon, and written this letter to ask you to send me your description of your story needs and discussion of manuscript format. [Done!] I've enclosed a stamped, self-addressed envelope. By God, if you guys keep this up, I have to start writing science fiction again. After all, fun people like George H. Scithers have to have SOMETHING to read between issues!

Loving every word of it,

Steven V. Smith
Fairhaven MA

P.S. My only criticism of your collective endeavor is that it

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should have happened when I was still 17. Why, oh why, did you have to wait 16 years to show me that there are still worlds out there?

Oh, well, to be honest, George and I preach, too, but we both have the misfortune of being unable to do so without a grin.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov:

The story I liked best in the September-October issue was "The Bitter End".

It represented the psychic abilities as being scientific and not magical. The characters are believable and interesting. The mystery is interesting and fairly complex. I did think the author put too much accent in certain places, making it hard to understand.

I also enjoyed "An Eye for Detail," "Thirty Love," and some of the others. The paradox presented in "The Adventure of the Global Traveler" was very interesting. I liked "The Toroids of Dr. Klonefake." (By the way does "Klonefake" have anything to do with "clone fake"?) I didn't like "Scrap from the Notebooks of Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe" although it was interesting.

Now for my question. *Dr. Asimov, how do you pronounce your name?* I can think of at least two ways to pronounce "Isaac," and I have no idea about "Asimov."

Sincerely,

Eric Evans
Plains KS

Since my name is in the title, I suppose it's important to get the pronunciation right. "Isaac" is EYE-zik, two syllables, not three. "Asimov" is AZ-ih-mov, accent on the first syllable, all vowels short.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear George:

In response to James Carter's angry letter (Sept–Oct 1978) about my NRAO article, I can say I wish it had been less angry and more tightly reasoned. Then communication might be possible. As it stands, I am sure any reply on my part will be to no

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avail. The fact that I gave tourist lectures at NRAO during two summers, volunteered to do extra duty when fellow students could not, offered visitors the opportunity to return after their bus tours to talk with me, gave personally conducted tours to those showing great interest, and write articles for magazines such as this one, amply demonstrates that I am concerned about reaching the "teeming savages," as Mr. Carter calls them.

Nonetheless, I can understand his confusion about my stance; it perhaps was not expressed as well as it might have been. Yes, of course we give the tours because the visitors foot the bill for our research and deserve to see what we are doing. If the visitors did come to gawk at the gizmos, that would be fine, for then we could explain what the gizmos do. Yet, I cannot force the tourists off the bus to hear me if they refuse. I cannot convince them we are not a military establishment if they choose not to believe me. Most tourists do, in fact, come because the Cass Scenic Railroad is nearby and, I am convinced, if this were not so, our influx would drop from 30,000 visitors each summer to 5,000. Precious few come because they have an interest in what we are doing, or even an interest in being interested. Ignorance is to be expected; lack of curiosity is not. The former can be slightly alleviated in a 10-minute demonstration. But we cannot force them off the bus. Why do they get on the bus in the first place? Well, the Cass Railroad is nearby.

As for "being perplexed by all the ignorance in the world," I frankly admit that I am, though as I said above, I have come to expect it—in myself as well as others. Yet, I do find it sad that 20-year-old students in my university classes and in the classes of my fellow instructors cannot divide three by one. I find it sad that such students do not know what a thermometer is, or do not know that a ruler is used for measuring length, or cannot spell with the ability I would expect of a 10-year-old. I find this almost unbearably sad, that these *adults* have crept through their entire lives without being equipped well enough to function in *their* world. And, while these people deserve the opportunity to see what scientists do at their research, do we really think they are well enough informed to make decisions about what research should be done? If Mr. Carter was implying that they should decide, then I must disagree. Yes, I am perplexed. How have we allowed this state of affairs to materialize? I am not sure. But I do not think the situation will be improved if we all remain "concerned about it strictly on a personal basis." I think, instead, we will end up in

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the stone ages.

Best regards,

Tony Rothman
Austin TX

IVORY TOWER AND MIDDLE AMERICA: TEN YEARS LATER

A decade has passed since he caustically wrote
Of disdain for the average man
Whose taxes support astronomical costs
Of projects he can't understand
But time has a way (as expressed in clichés)
Of eroding the strongest of walls
A family, a house, a tenure-track job
And the tower soon crumbles and falls
No, he would not admit it, if you queried him now
On his way to the Little League game
But Ivory Tower *has* met Middle America
And the two are now one and the same

Mark C. Rowh
Bluefield WV

Dear Dr. Asimov,

Your magazine is the best and my very favorite. While reading your Sept/Oct issue, I came across a letter from a fan, Stephen Fleming, who said he liked the magazine because it "emphasizes the 'hard-core' science fiction." Your answer was, "It strikes me that the adjective 'hard-core' is used most frequently to modify another noun we need not mention here. I wonder if someone can suggest a better name for the kind of science fiction men like Arthur Clarke, Hal Clement, and I write."

I totally agree and I'll tell you why. The night before I read that letter, we went out to dinner with some friends. One of the men at the table asked me what kind of reading I preferred and—

I answered boldly, "Science fiction!"

He asked politely, "What kind?"

I said proudly, "Hard-core!"

He said, with a leer, "Not many people admit to that—I read that dirty stuff too!"

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By that time I realized he knew nothing about science fiction and a hush came over the table you wouldn't believe, all eyes on me. Well, needless to say, I cleared up the misunderstanding as fast as I could. Now everyone knows I'm not "evil-minded" and are convinced that a 36-year-old female who still reads SF avidly is just a little "feeble-minded."

Ever since, the words 'hard-core' are haunting me everywhere I go—"Hard-Core Sex Novel"; "Sizzling Hard-Core Movie"; "Hard-Core Photos"; etc. The words never bothered me before but lately I've got Hard-Corephobia!

Today was the last straw . . . . the kids brought home a note about school lunches and in it was a sentence which said, "We have ordered a line of more nutritional snacks to supplement the basic lunch and we have eliminated all of the *hard-core* sweets." After I came down from the ceiling I decided there has to be a better way to describe my favorite kind of SF

Please try to come up with an answer because I can't even eat an apple anymore because you are left with (oh, no!, I can't bear to say it) a H--- C---! Eeeek!

Your Fan,

Barbara Heath
Orinda, CA

Most frequently I call it "hard science fiction". I've been thinking we might try "classical science fiction." Or maybe we could just call it "science fiction" and persuade people to call everything else "sci-fi."

— Isaac Asimov

Dear Good Doctor:

Have just been reading the September-October 1978 issue of *IA'sfm* and wanted to thank you, George H. Scithers, and the rest of the staff for a truly outstanding magazine. I look forward to every issue and believe your January-February 1978 issue was the best because I could not find a single copy in all of the stores that I knew carried your magazine. However, I have remedied that problem by submitting my subscription under separate cover.

Enclosed please find a stamped self-addressed envelope for a copy of your story needs and manuscript requirements. [Done.]

In regards to the term 'hard-core' as an adjective to science fiction, I offer the alternative: *extrapolative*. However, for those who

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find that word as unromantic as I do (besides requiring explanation to the uninitiated), I offer my personal favorite for nomination: *asimovian*. As you can see (and hear), the latter is the more satisfying. Now, if there are enough readers around to persuade you to dispense with your well-known modesty . . .

"Bat Durston, Space Marshal" and "The Victor Hours," though I did not particularly care for them, were well done. "Softly Touch the Stranger's Mind" and "An Eye for Detail" were both very good. The "Editorial" and "Letters" columns were excellent as always.

Again, thank you for an enjoyable evening of reading.

Sincerely yours,

Oswald L. Cooper
Indianapolis IN

Gee, I never thought of "asimovian." It has more of a swing to it than "clarkeian" or "heinleinian," I admit.

—Isaac Asimov

Gentlemen:

A friend loaned me his copy of your magazine. (September-October.) Drat! It appears I have been missing a good thing! Science fiction with detectable traces (even some chunks) of real science embedded! *Two* scoops of raisins!

I will not miss your next issue.

In twenty-plus years of reading science fiction I have never subscribed to a magazine, but if September's performance proves to be your normal cruising altitude I will ensure further issues by subscription.

Getting philosophical about the reasons for my enthusiasm, I believe it is due to the "science" in the fiction; the approach to things unknown, to change and the possibilities for the future.

Primitive men were passive and defensive. Their world acted upon *them* for unknown and unknowable reasons. (Or *no* reasons.) If things happen without reasons, absolutely *anything* can happen; there is no predictability, and change is frightening.

Humans, however, are the most "intelligent" organisms on this planet. Intelligence in an organism is the ability to perceive its environment and behave according to that perception in ways beneficial to the organism. Faced with something unknown, some of

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us believe that by poking, sniffing, listening, and tasting we can understand and *anticipate* the actions of our environment.

Science is our essentially optimistic effort to improve our perceptions, to increase our understanding, so we may behave in ways beneficial to us. My favorite science fiction reflects this positive attitude, looking ahead with enthusiasm and confidence, not apprehension.

None of this suggests to me a neat alternative to the "hard core" which seems to make Dr. Asimov uneasy. In fact, I think "*science* fiction" is the correct description and we should persuade the other guys to change *their* terminology.

Sincerely,

Ray Allis
Petaluma, CA

My little answers at the end of letters should be light-hearted and, if possible, witty. I can't resist an occasional simple "I agree." In this case—I agree.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Mr. Scithers,

I received my copy of your manuscript requirements, and there it was on page 2:

"If your story's only SF elements are a few exotic names applied to otherwise ordinary beings and things, we'll class it as a Bat Durston (after the cowboy of that same name who called his pistol a 'proton blaster' and planned to head off the bad guys at the Horse-Head Nebula . . .) and we'll send it right back."

You should have stuck to your guns (or proton blasters)! Your magazine attracts a lot of readers new to science fiction, being associated with one of the best-known and respected writers in the field. By publishing "Bat Durston, Space Marshal" (Sept-Oct 1978) you perpetuate SF's Space Opera image. Exaggerating its faults doesn't necessarily make a bad story funny (it wasn't) and publishing it may encourage others of little imagination to try their hand at more of the same.

Ginny Martin
Clear Lake TX

Now, now, the ability to laugh at one's self is a sign of adult maturity. If SF doesn't have that by now, I would be ashamed of it.

—Isaac Asimov

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Dear Mr. Scithers:

The May-June issue of *IA'sfm* is, in my estimation, the best—so far. So good, in fact, that it has prompted my first ever letter to an SF magazine. Several of the stories, "Star Train," "Polly Plus," and "The Man Who Took the Fifth," met my personal criteria for good stories. That is, they entertained me, made me think, made me feel, and made me want to save them to read again. However, what I liked best in the issue was, without doubt, "Wolf Tracks"—and all I could find out about the author was a name, George Gaither. From internal evidence I suspect some familiarity with our capital city and a drop or more of lupine blood. Please, publish more of his tracks and pass along to him a howl of appreciation.

Dr. Asimov's editorials are always what I read first, for fun and profit. "On Books" is a welcome guide in coping with the publication explosion, long may it continue. My least favorite item in every issue is the puzzle, such as the "Voyage of the Bagel." I can't even come up with one answer and you want more.

I bought the May-June issue of *IA'sfm* during the last week of June at a branch store of a local bookstore chain (WaldenBooks). Interestingly, Waldens does not sell magazines—SF or other. None of the employees I talked to could tell me why *IA'sfm* was an exception.

Finally, I would like to request a copy of your Instructions on Format and Description of Needs. [Done.]

Sincerely

Suzanne G. Kerry
McLean VA

The secret to coming up with answers to Martin's puzzles is to think about it. Don't look up the answers at once. There are bound to be dull times during the day when you can mull it over and pass the time. That way you get your answer— and your money's worth.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov & Mr. Scithers:

The first thing I do upon receiving your magazine is to read the letters, which are always interesting and often amusing. The letters in your Sept-Oct issue stimulated three observations which I will share with you. Firstly, there appears to be a preponderance of "I love your magazine" letters. On the surface, this looks sus-

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picious. But judging from my own experience, it is perfectly natural; each issue proves to be better than the last.

The fact that some people don't enjoy some of the stories brings me to my second observation on the letters in the last issue. Jeff Dennis criticized one author for not realizing that the human brain is fully developed at birth. In fact, the cerebral cortex is so incompletely wired at birth as to be practically non-functional. Rapid neural development begins almost immediately, but is not completed until age six or seven (some assert it isn't finished until age 13, others claim it goes on till death). Mr. Dennis is not alone in his ignorance, however. Proponents of birth trauma theories are also victims of the fallacy of the fully functional neonate brain. Since personality and memory are universally seen as being rooted in cortical functioning, one is hard pressed to defend the notion that birth trauma either can be remembered or can have an influence on later personality development. The only really critical event that happens to the neonate is the quality of the mother-child binding which is an instinct that serves to initiate a life-long deep relationship.

My last observation on the letters is again a general one. Have you noticed how many sincere people write to your magazine? Of the 14 correspondents in the Sept-Oct issue, seven signed themselves *sincerely*. The word sincere is a nice word that is often sullied by overuse. One assumes that a person is sincere when he or she takes the time and effort to share his or her thoughts. It detracts from the message to be told at the end that the writer is sincere. It is true that we are tempted to sign sincerely when writing to those whom we perceive as our betters, but we're all people, aren't we?

On second thought, an argument can be made that some people have acheived a degree of perfection that is unmatched by others. Upon further pondering, I can understand that people may be uncertain in writing to the esteemed Dr. Asimov. In such cases, I guess it's best not to take chances.

Very sincerely yours,

Joseph G. Dlhopolsky, Ph.D.
Port Jefferson NY

Ordinarily, I'm a little leery about placing scientific discussions in the letter column, but this one interests me. The "wiring" may go on after birth, but it is my impression that the number of cells no longer increases.

—Isaac Asimov

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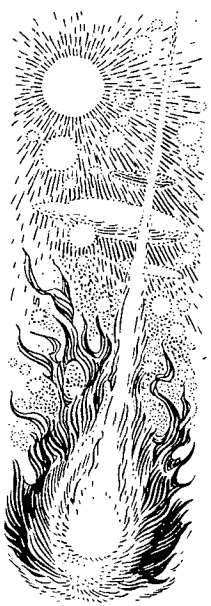
As always, I want to let you know that your letters are read and appreciated by us here at the magazine. Sometimes, we find that a story which the editor felt was merely good, the readers insist is excellent or better. (And, sometimes, the reverse.) Either way, your comments help shape the magazine's future. More immediately, your comments influence which stories the editor picks for the annual anthologies based on the magazine, and thus the additional payments those selected authors will receive.

We welcome story submissions from beginning writers as well as established ones—but please!—before your first submission, send for a copy of our requirement sheet and format information (include a stamped envelope, addressed to yourself, about 9-½ inches long, for this).

The address for letters to the editor and for manuscript inquiries and submissions is Box 13116, Philadlephia PA 19101. Subscription matters, including changes of address, go to the magazine at Box 1855 GPO, New York NY 10001.

—George H Scithers



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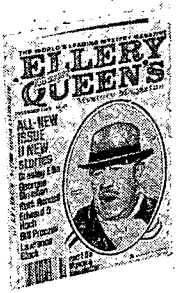

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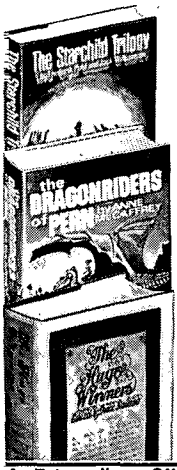

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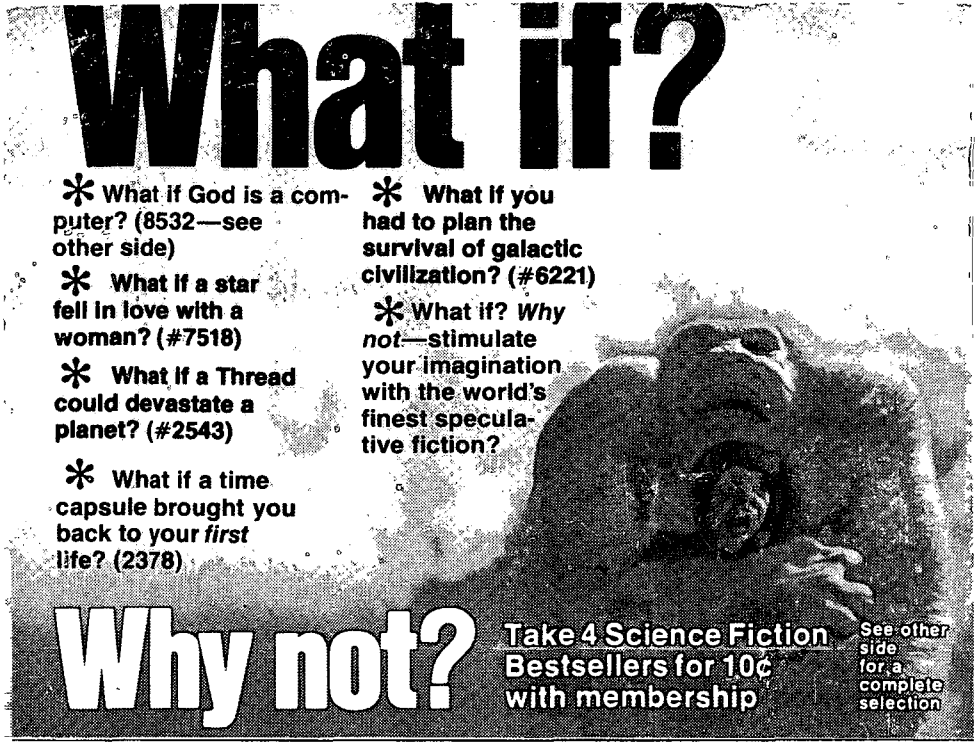

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